

Rebel commander says Turkey occupying buffer zone, threatens terror campaign

ANKARA (AP) — A Kurdish rebel commander has accused Turkey of occupying a buffer zone in northern Iraq and threatened it with a terror campaign if it doesn't withdraw.

"Suicide attacks, will be carried out inside Turkey," Semdin Sakik, a senior guerrilla commander, said on Kurdish television. Mr. Sakik spoke with London-based Med TV Friday — the text of the interview was made available to the Associated Press (AP) Saturday.

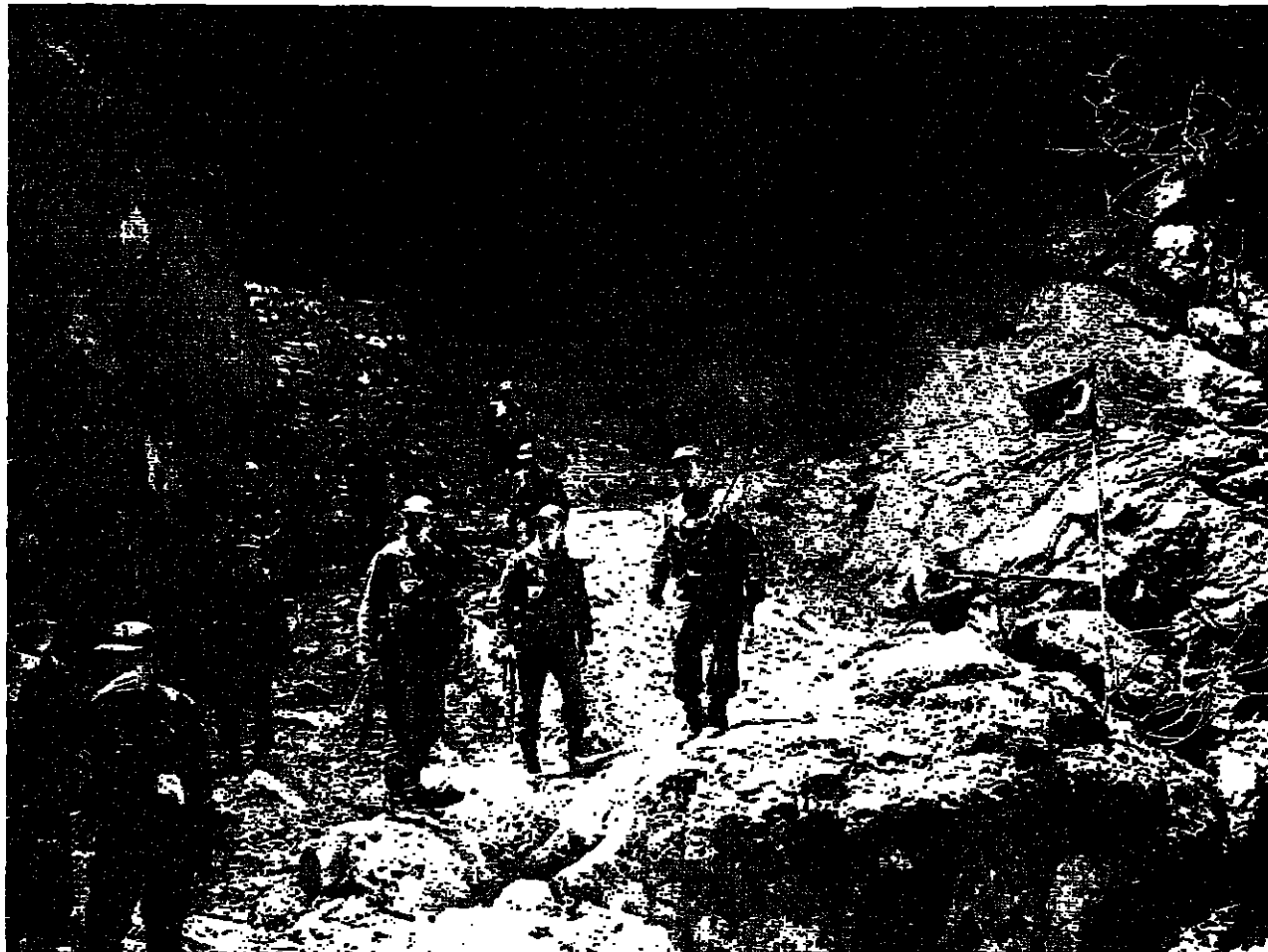
Suicide bombings by Turkish Kurds have claimed 10 lives in Turkey in the past two years. Turkey sent an estimated 30,000 troops into northern Iraq May 14 in a bid to wipe out rebel bases used for cross-border attacks. The rebel strength in northern Iraq is estimated at about 10,000.

Turkish troops have fanned out over a 330-kilometre strip extending 65 kilometres into Iraq and reportedly taken several rebel strongholds.

Mr. Sakik, the rebel commander, said the Turkish army is trying to occupy a buffer zone in northern Iraq. Turkey said last fall it wanted to establish a buffer zone inside Iraq and Washington approved the plan. Reports that Turkish troops have started building fortresses may indicate the plan is now being set in motion.

Med TV said Turkish troops are setting up bases at the towns of Aroush, Sarsang and Sumall, about 55 kilometres from the Turkish border. It said the bases are encircled by barbed wire and mines.

This is the fourth year in a row that Turkey has carried out a major spring offensive in northern Iraq. Each time the guerrillas have regrouped and returned to their strongholds once the Turkish troops were gone. Iraqi Kurds established a de facto state in northern Iraq after the 1991 Gulf war. The Turkish-Kurdish rebels took advantage of the



Turkish soldiers stand before a giant cave at the rugged Zap camp in the northern Iraq, 25 kilometres south of Turkish border, after they captured it from the Kurdish Labour Party rebels on Saturday (Reuters photo)

Iraq calls for Arab meeting to condemn Turkish incursion

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq called Sunday for a meeting of Arab foreign ministers to condemn Turkey's incursion and demand an immediate withdrawal of the tens of thousands of Turkish troops in the north of the country.

Arab foreign ministers should issue a joint stand in support of Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity, said the official daily Al Thawra.

"Is it too much to ask on the part of Iraq, which is being subjected to a Turkish military aggression? Is it too much to ask, on the part of Iraq which has supported all Arabs?" asked the paper.

Saturday, an official Iraqi newspaper run by President Saddam Hussein's son Uday said an Arab meeting was "necessary to defend Iraq."

power vacuum to set up bases there. Arab countries have demanded quick exit of Turkish troops from

northern Iraq and Italy has urged Turkey to seek a political — not a military — solution to the Kurdish

"It is time for Arabs to end Iraq's isolation and punish Turkey if it does not put an end to its repeated incursions" to hunt down rebels from the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) in northern Iraq, said Babel.

Turkey has tripled its presence in northern Iraq to around 30,000 troops and killed nearly 1,450 PKK rebels since the operation was launched May 14, a Turkish military official said Sunday.

The PKK uses northern Iraq, controlled by Iraqi Kurds in defiance of Baghdad since 1991, as a rear base in its fight for an independent homeland in south-east Turkey.

Iraq insists that any return of its authority to the region can guarantee security on the Turkish border.

problem. The guerrillas from the Kurdistan Labour Party have been fighting for

autonomy in south-eastern Turkey for 13 years. The war has killed 28,000 people so far.

PNA detains more Arabs for selling land to Jews

Al Azhar leader backs death sentence for land sales to Israelis

CAIRO (AFP) — The head of Al Azhar, the highest Sunni authority, has backed the death sentence against Palestinians who sell their land to Israelis, the government press reported Sunday.

"The sale of land (by Palestinians to Israelis) is high treason," Sheikh Mohammad Sayyed Tantawi said in comments carried by the official Egyptian press, including the Al Ahran daily.

Sheikh Tantawi said he backed the capital punishment for Palestinians who sell their land to Israelis. Al Ahran reported in a dispatch from London.

Jordanian law, still officially in effect in the West Bank and Arab east Jerusalem since Israel occupied the areas in 1967, imposes the death penalty on Palestinians who sell land to Jews. Two Palestinians accused of selling land to Israelis have been found killed in recent weeks.

Palestinian Justice Minister Freih Abu Middein called for reviving the execution of land dealers in early May but President Yasser Arafat last Wednesday stressed that Jordanian law "has not been implemented."

Friday, Palestinian Attorney General Khaled Al Qidra told AFP that at least a dozen Palestinians who have sold land to Israelis have been arrested, despite growing U.S. protests. And witnesses said at least three more Palestinians were arrested in the West Bank for the same offence Saturday. Sheikh Tantawi returned home late Saturday from London after an eight-day visit during which he stressed that Arab east Jerusalem should keep its Arab and multi-confessional identity.

During his visit, at the invitation of the archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, Sheikh Tantawi stressed that Islam was a religion of tolerance and denounced murders in Algeria in the name of Islam.

offenders.

Jordan controlled the West Bank from 1948 until it was occupied by Israel in 1967.

"Land means honour and both are holy, so anyone selling land will be hunted by the law," Mr. Qidra said.

Israel has linked the ban on land sales with the recent killings of two Palestinian land dealers found dead in the West Bank. The authority, which

says the law is applied by the courts and not vigilantes, has denied any involvement in the killings.

Palestinians say the purchase of land by Jews and Israeli settlement building in Jerusalem, the rest of the West Bank and Gaza pre-empt final peace talks on the fate of the areas where they hope to establish an independent state.

Palestinians think U.S. favours Israel, poll finds

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — An overwhelming number of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip think the United States favours Israel in its Middle East peace mediation, according to a poll published on Sunday.

The poll by the Palestinian Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre (JMCC) showed a drop in support for the peace process with Israel since last month and a decline in the number of Palestinians who felt President Yasser Arafat was doing a good job.

About 91 per cent of those polled said they felt the United States, main sponsor of Middle East peace moves, was "biased towards Israel" while 4.1 per cent said Washington was neutral.

Under one per cent said the United States was siding with the Palestinians.

Members of Arafat's self-rule administration have criticised the United States for failing to put pressure on Israel to halt settlement building in occupied Arab lands.

Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo said on Sunday Washington was "disgraceful" for letting Israel go ahead with construction of a 6,500-home settlement in Arab east Jerusalem launched in March which has plunged peacemaking into crisis.

The United States has said both sides must make tough decisions to revive the peacemaking.

Support for the peace process among Palestinians has declined from 73

per cent to 69 per cent since April, according to the JMCC poll.

Around 26 per cent of those questioned said they still backed the peace process which launched limited self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1994.

Asked to assess Arafat's performance as head of the Palestinian National Authority, 53.7 per cent said it was "good" compared with 67.8 per cent last month. Just over 30 per cent of those polled described his performance as "average" and 11.6 said it was "bad."

Nearly 1,200 people were interviewed for the poll, which had a margin of error of three per cent, the JMCC said.

Arab neighbours, Israel welcome vote for change in Iran

DUBAI (AFP) — Iran's Arab neighbours in the Gulf and its arch-foe Israel Sunday welcomed the surprise victory of moderate cleric Mohammad Khatami in what was seen as a vote for change in Iran's presidential election.

King Fahd of Saudi Arabia was among the first to congratulate Mr. Khatami and wished the president-elect, succeeding Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani who served a maximum two terms, "success in the service of the brotherly Iranian people."

He hoped Mr. Khatami's victory over Islamist hard-liner Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri in Friday's polls would "strengthen the good relations between the two brother countries, in the service of the Islamic nation."

Ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia, strained since the 1979 Islamic revolution in Tehran, have been on the mend this year, an improvement marked by Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati's visit to the kingdom in March.

Newspapers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which has a territorial dispute with Iran, said Sunday that Mr. Khatami had a golden opportunity to improve Tehran's image in the region and international community at large.

"The very convincing majority for Mr. Khatami creates a water-shed in post-revolution Iran... This gives Mr. Khatami a serious opportunity to improve Iran's standing in the world," the Gulf News

said. But the Gulf News called for the president-elect to review Iran's stand in the dispute with the UAE over three strategic islands in the southern Gulf, saying "then a major easing of relations in the region will be possible."

"His efforts to improve Iran's international relations should be aimed not only at the West... but also closer to home," agreed the Gulf Today, referring to Iran's dispute with the West over its alleged involvement in terrorism.

The Khalij Times also welcomed the vote for change but cautioned that "it is a sobering thought that the paramount leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, tilted" during the election campaign toward parliament speaker Nateq-Nouri.

In similar vein to King Fahd, Kuwait's Emir Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah congratulated Mr. Khatami on winning "the trust of the Iranian people" and hoped to "strengthen the cordial relations and cooperation" between the two neighbours.

Liberal MP and former Kuwaiti education minister Ahmad Rubel, writing in Al Qabas newspaper, said the election signalled that "the time has come to launch radical reforms in (Iran's) internal and foreign policy."

"I hope the West, and the United States in particular, reads Iranian affairs carefully, and reads the Iranian election results as an indication of the will of the Iranian majority to develop and open up to the world," he said.

Qatar's emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, also congratulated Mr. Khatami.

In Israel, the arch-foe of the Islamic Republic of Iran, a senior official said that the election of a relative moderate was "encouraging" but would not necessarily lead to a change in Tehran's policies.

"This election is a positive and encouraging development for the future of our relations with Iran, but we shouldn't jump to any conclusions yet," said Uri Lubrani, a former ambassador to pre-revolution Tehran.

Mr. Lubrani noted that "enmity towards the United States and the refusal to recognise Israel's right to existence remain the bases of the political system" in Iran.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:35French Programmes
16:00 Documentary — The German scene
16:25Deep Water Haven
16:50The Ocean Girl
17:15 Documentary — Extra Dimensions
18:00French Programmes
19:00News in French
19:30News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — One Foot in the Grave
20:00Secretes of Science
20:30Murder She Wrote
21:10Highlander
22:00News in English
22:30The White Verdict
23:15 Mini Series — Cinder Path

PRAYER TIMES

03:56Fajr
05:28(Sunrise) Doha
12:32Dhuhr
16:13Asr
19:37Maghreb
21:09Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh. Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 827126
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.
Church of Nazarene Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Fine to moderate weather condi-

tions will prevail with winds northwesterly light to moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman16/30
Aqaba22/38
Deserts14/33
Jordan Valley18/36
Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 30, Aqaba 39 Humidity readings: Amman 23 per cent. Aqaba 24 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Khalil Jbali740740
Dr. Walid Al Masri675485
Dr. Yousef Rashed875792
Dr. Jum'a Abu Dhiab788336
Firas pharmacy661912
Ferdows pharmacy778336
Al Asema pharmacy637055
Nairoukh pharmacy623672
Al Salam pharmacy636730

Yacoub pharmacy644945
Shmeisani pharmacy637660
Najib pharmacy847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'ameh250080
Al Quds pharmacy(—)

ZARQA:
Dr. Walid Halaseh982799
Khalifeh pharmacy985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre637111
Civil Defence Department661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Fire Brigade617101
Blood Bank775121
Highway Police843402
Traffic Police896390
Public Security Dept.630321
Hotel Complaints605800
Price Complaints661176
Water & Sewage Complaints897467
Amman Municipality Complaints787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs661101
Radio Jordan774111
Water Authority680100
J. Electricity Authority815615
Electric Power Co.636381
RJ Flight Information08-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-53200

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre813813/2
Khalidi Maternity644281/6
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Jabal Amman Maternity642362
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Tigers blunt Sri Lanka's latest offensive; toll hits 385

COLOMBO (AFP) — Tamil rebels slowed Sri Lanka's biggest military drive with ferocious counter attacks as overnight clashes raised the death toll to 385 from both sides, officials and the guerrillas said Sunday.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said they destroyed a tank and a troop carrier during Saturday's battle outside the northern town of Olanthai and killed 20 government soldiers.

"A further two Sri Lankan battle tanks were damaged beyond repair," the Tigers said in a statement sent here from their London office and added 75 Sri Lankan soldiers were wounded.

The Defence Ministry said 30 Tigers were killed in the fierce clash just north of the town of Olanthai which the security forces captured following the latest offensive launched on May 13.

"Ground troops and other sources confirm that 30 ter-

rorists were killed and another 75 were wounded," a Defence Ministry spokesman said. The ministry played down army losses and said 14 soldiers were killed.

Saturday's face-to-face fighting raised to 385 the number of combatants killed since the military launched its latest push on May 13, according to claims by the military and the guerrillas.

The Defence Ministry in a brief one-paragraph statement said troops advanced three kilometres amid stiff resistance by the guerrillas Saturday.

Until Saturday's fighting the rebels had lost 250 of their cadres killed, according to official estimates, while the army suffered 85 killed and some 600 wounded, with 120 of them in a serious condition.

The latest military action is aimed at opening a 75-kilometre road through Tiger areas to link the northern peninsula of Jaffna, a

former Tiger stronghold, with the rest of the country.

The expected resumption of the army campaign involving two divisions, 20,000 men, came Saturday after a four-day lull in fighting and as Tiger guerrillas and security forces traded charges of attacks against civilians.

The LTTE in a separate statement from its London office said the Colombo government was blocking food supplies reaching Tamil civilians living in rebel-held areas of the north and were also shelling them.

Security forces captured the two key rebel towns of Olanthai and Nedunkerni after long range battles and the Tigers said homes of civilians had been flattened.

"Two hundred lorry loads of rice and 200 lorry loads of flour are urgently needed to feed the Tamils who have been displaced by Sri Lanka's latest military offensive," the LTTE said. However government officials in the northern town of Vavuniya, 254 kilometres north of here, said they made arrangements to send food to some 6,500 families affected by the war.

"Cooked food will be given to the displaced persons for three days and thereafter they will get dry rations for two weeks," a rehabilitation official in Vavuniya said by telephone.

He said there had been no civilian casualties in the latest military campaign against the LTTE because people had already fled their homes before the military could start their offensive.

Meanwhile police have strengthened security in the capital Colombo amid fears of suicide attacks by a dozen tiger cadres who are believed to have infiltrated the city.

The Tiger guerrillas are leading a drawn-out campaign for independence in the island's northern and eastern regions. More than 50,000 people have died in bitter fighting in the past 25 years.



Rebel soldiers stop the anti-Kabila demonstration from marching through the streets of Kinshasa. Some two hundred opposition supporters of Etienne Tshisekedi tried to march through the streets of the capital city Saturday to protest his exclusion from the new government announced by President Laurent Kabila but were stopped by rebel soldiers, arrested and taken away by trucks (Reuters photo)

Kabila's Congo concerned about security

KINSHASA (R) — Laurent Kabila's troops woke guests Sunday to search for arms at the hotel where most of his New Democratic Republic of Congo government stays, and diplomats said there were growing signs of edginess over security.

After two days of street protests against his takeover, Mr. Kabila said elections in Africa's third largest country would have to wait for two years.

Just after dawn heavily armed soldiers, many of them teenagers, moved into Kinshasa's top hotel, demanding to search rooms and forcing open doors where guests were sleeping.

Western diplomats said their colleagues living in flats overlooking the river-side prime minister's residence Mr. Kabila has taken in the teeming capital had been told to move out.

"They are obsessed by security above anything else," said one diplomat.

State radio reported Sunday a protest by students Saturday, saying it was against the presence of foreign troops among Mr. Kabila's forces. Demonstrators held for questioning were later released, it said.

Quoting a message from

the justice and interior ministers, it also denounced looting of properties of suspected or former members of ousted President Mobutu Sese Seko's government, saying those responsible for "these anti-democratic acts faced severe punishment."

During a rare public appearance Saturday, Mr. Kabila, whose forces drove out Mr. Mobutu a week ago after a whirlwind seven-month offensive, said elections would have to wait two years.

Mr. Kabila told CNN the country had to prepare for elections but said there would be a "democratic election after (a) two years transitional period."

Western countries joined other nations in welcoming the toppling of Mr. Mobutu and his entourage, who were widely accused of pilaging what is potentially one of Africa's richest nations and amassing personal fortunes.

But they have conditioned their support for Mr. Kabila on formation of a broad-based government to steer Congo to multi-party elections — a transition Mr. Mobutu reluctantly agreed to and then failed to implement.

Witnesses said troops fired in the air to break up Saturday's march by about 1,000 students protesting against Mr. Kabila's government and the presence of Tutsi soldiers from Rwanda and other eastern neighbours of what used to be Zaire.

Kabila's Democratic Alliance for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL) denies the presence of foreign troops within his forces.

A smaller pro-Kabila demonstration took place later.

Mr. Kabila, who arrived in Kinshasa Tuesday, has named a 13-member government, including four non-alliance members, saying that more posts will be filled shortly.

"It is a broad-based government," he said Saturday. Mr. Kabila and his administration have won backing from Nelson Mandela's South Africa for progress so far.

South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, who played a key role in attempts to ensure a peaceful transition, said Friday Congo could not afford to rush into elections and a fair poll would be difficult to achieve soon after taking

power. Mr. Kabila's administration blamed reactionary political forces linked to the ousted Mobutu government for Kinshasa street protests and said demonstrations were technically banned.

"In principle demonstrations have not been permitted in all parts of the country that we have liberated in this period of consolidation, but we are very tolerant," Information Minister Raphael Ghenda told Reuters. But many in Kinshasa expressed private disappointment that Mr. Kabila found no place in the government for Etienne Tshisekedi, the veteran leader of the internal political opposition to Mr. Mobutu.

Mr. Tshisekedi, who has a strong following in the city, claims the job of prime minister — a post to which he was elected in 1992 by a sovereign national conference but from which Mr. Mobutu sacked him. The alliance says there will be no prime minister.

Mr. Mobutu, weakened by prostate cancer, arrived in Morocco Friday from Togo but an official in Rabat said Saturday he was expected to go on to France early next month.

Beijing urges U.S. to lift controls on nuclear equipment exports

BEIJING (AFP) — Beijing warned Sunday that U.S. companies risked missing out on contracts for nuclear power development in China if Washington insisted on maintaining restrictions on nuclear equipment exports.

A senior official from the China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC) pointed to the strong French involvement in the country's nuclear power development and said Beijing "does not rule out the possibility of cooperating with any country."

"Countries must be willing to transfer advanced, mature and safe technology, to offer financing arrangements and be economically competitive," the CNNC deputy director general, Li Donghui, was quoted as saying by the China Daily Business Weekly.

Mr. Li said countries such

as France, Canada and Russia, had already won nuclear contracts in China, and companies in countries such as the United States, Japan and South Korea were "impatient" to penetrate the promising market.

He referred to the U.S. giant Westinghouse Electric Corp. as a company "active in joining hands with CNNC to develop a new generation of nuclear power plant for the next century."

Westinghouse and a team of researchers from Shanghai had designed in February plans for a million kilowatt power station that would be the first of its type in China.

However, the project risked being held up by political pressure, despite the existence of nuclear co-operation agreement signed by Washington and Beijing in 1985, Mr. Li said.

The agreement "has not been implemented and the U.S. government imposes restrictions on U.S. companies to export nuclear power equipment to China," he said.

Mr. Li said he hoped the agreement could take effect as soon as possible to benefit both sides.

China has two nuclear power plants in operation. One at Qinshan in eastern Zhejiang, and the other, built by a Franco-British consortium at Daya Bay in southern Guangdong province.

Four more plants are under construction, three of them with foreign input from Russia, Canada and Franco-British consortium. Nuclear power accounts for one per cent of electricity generation in China at present and Beijing wants this increased to four per cent by 2010.

ASEAN defence officials seen joining security talks

KUALA LUMPUR (R) — Defence officials for the first time will join the annual security talks the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) holds with Asian and Western powers, diplomats said over the weekend.

Senior officials of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), who met this week in Malaysia's resort island of Langkawi, agreed to invite defence officials at the 21-member grouping's annual meeting in July.

The talks have always taken place at the foreign ministers' level. A proposal, adopted unanimously in Langkawi, would allow senior defence officials to join the meeting, one Western diplomat who attended the Langkawi meeting said. "ARF is supposed to be a forum about security but there's never been any security officials at the meetings," he said.

If foreign ministers of the member countries adopt the recommendation, as expected, defence officials would join the next ARF ministerial meeting in Kuala Lumpur on July 27, an Asian diplomat said.

The ARF was set up four years ago as a way to eventually solve potential conflicts in the Asia-Pacific region.

It is supposed to evolve through three stages, from discussion of issues to preventive diplomacy and finally to conflict resolution.

"Right now we're between step one and step two," the Western diplomat said. "We're groping towards preventive diplomacy."

"Some countries are enthusiastic about ARF being more than a talk shop and having real clout in settling disputes. Others are extremely reluctant to go forward in that way," he said. China, which has several territorial disputes with countries in the region over islands in the South China Sea, is adamantly opposed to allowing ARF — and by extension the United States and Europe — a role in settling disputes.

Asia's premier security conference brings together ASEAN members — Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam — and key powers and trading partners, including the United States, Russia, China, Japan, India, the European Union, South Korea, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Cambodia, Laos and Burma — expected to join ASEAN this year — are also ARF members and so is Papua New Guinea.

Burma detains more than 250 opposition supporters — NLD

BANGKOK (AFP) — Burma's ruling junta has detained at least 250 supporters of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and is pushing ahead with its latest crackdown on her party, a senior party official said Sunday.

The National League for Democracy (NLD) had documented names and details of 193 NLD supporters who have been detained, but said reports filtering in from the provinces indicated more than 250 had been rounded up, he said.

"(Once the detentions have all been documented) I think it will come up to... more than 250," he said by telephone from Rangoon.

"We have learned that many more are being detained in the provinces," he added. "I think the detentions are still going on. We are going to see this evening or tomorrow (Monday) whether they will make any sort of oppression on our Rangoon members," the official, who declined to be identified, said.

The military government began rounding up NLD activists last week ahead of a planned party congress to mark the seventh anniversary of the party's founding.

sary of abortive elections which Ms. Suu Kyi and her party won, the NLD has said.

The ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) however Saturday denied any arrests or persecution of NLD members, but it distinguishes between arrests and detentions.

An official said Saturday local authorities had simply asked NLD supporters "to refrain from taking actions designed to create chaos in the country."

A statement issued by the SLORC's embassy in Bangkok also noted however every government "sometimes detains individuals who threaten actions to create chaos and cause social disruption."

The NLD has said most of the detentions were in Mandalay, Sagaing, Bago and Ayeeyarwaddy divisions of the country, while there had not yet been any arrests reported in Rangoon.

The NLD had notified the government authorities two days ago of the party's plans to hold a meeting to mark the seventh anniversary of the 1990 election.

Phones and electricity

were cut most of the day in the neighbourhoods surrounding party officials' homes and NLD headquarters in Rangoon, making the immediate compilation of exact numbers of detentions impossible.

The NLD official said about 1,200 party members had been invited to the party congress, planned in Rangoon for May 27-28, but only 100 to 150 had made it to the capital so far, while up to 200 live in Rangoon anyway.

More than 50 of the 193 confirmed detainees were voted in as MPs in the elections, he said.

"The SLORC government does not like for our people to gather," the official said.

The junta never recognised the result of the 1990 elections and hung onto power after putting Ms. Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, under house arrest for six years until 1996. Had the 1990 parliament been convened, the NLD would have held more than 80 per cent of the seats.

The upcoming congress would be the third the party has held since Ms. Suu Kyi's release from six years of house arrest in July 1995.

Slovaks wait for referendum result

BRATISLAVA (R) — Slovaks are waiting for the results of a referendum but a low turnout could make the vote invalid and many critics have already denounced it as a failed test of the former Communist country's conversion to democracy.

Many thousands of voters refused to take part because of a dispute over the ballots, which asked them only about joining NATO.

A separate proposal on presidential elections had been deleted at the last minute in a feud between President Michal Kovac, who wants future presidents elected directly, and Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar, who might inherit presidential powers if the choice remains with parliament.

The Slovak Statistical Bureau said it finished processing the results early Sunday and would present them to the Central Referendum Committee later Sunday.

The referendum needs a turnout of more than 50 per cent to be valid and TASR news agency said no more than 15 per cent voted in many areas.

Opposition leaders, and a senior presidential official, met Sunday to consider their response.

Government and opposition leaders Saturday traded blame, and threats of legal action, over the chaos in a process which foreign diplomats had billed in advance as a test of democratic credentials.

Diarrhoea breaks out in Bangladesh cyclone-hit areas

DHAKA (AFP) — An outbreak of diarrhoea has hit some of the cyclone-battered southeastern coastal areas of Bangladesh killing six people and leaving 15,000 others ill, a senior official said Sunday.

"Diarrhoea has been reported from the cyclone hit areas, but the situation is under control and several government as well private medical teams are working in the coastal belt," Jawadul Karim, press secretary to the prime minister said.

Diarrhoea, which can be fatal unless treated quickly, kills by draining body fluid.

Monday's devastating cyclone has left 105 people dead, 10,000 injured and more than a million homeless.

Health Minister Salahuddin Yusuf earlier said 80 government and army medical teams were working in the cyclone-battered areas besides the Red Crescent and NGO medical workers and doctors.

"Sufficient quantity of anti-diarrhoea drugs has been supplied to the affected villages," he said.

Red Crescent officials said they were in constant contact with 33,000 volunteers working in the stricken areas and their doctors were treating the infected people.

Mr. Karim told reporters that relief activities were going on and army helicopters and troops have been deployed to assist the civil administration in carrying out the operations.

Meanwhile, The armed forces Sunday rejected charges from the main opposition party that it played only a minor role when a cyclone hit Bangladesh, insisting it swung into action as soon as the calamity struck.

"Our attention has been drawn to a comment made by the honourable opposition leader published in some newspapers Saturday that except for few vehicles, no other defence aid operation was seen," an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) statement said.

Rejecting the charges, the statement said "the military would like to say on this issue that the armed forces, on orders from the govern-

ment, went on alert as soon as the cyclone warning was made and were ready to take all possible steps to face the calamity."

It was the first direct statement by the defence forces following a statement by the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party of former Prime Minister Khleda Zia.

The opposition party is embroiled in a row with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed over the handling of the rescue and aid operation in cyclone-battered southeastern Bangladesh.

Mrs. Zia told reporters Friday: "The army was involved to face the disaster. So far I have not seen the army in aid operation (and) only saw several of their vehicles."

Analysts said the army's statement defying its actions was significant.

The army, which has taken a backseat after ruling Bangladesh directly or indirectly between 1975 and 1990, could be making it clear that it was acting on government orders and

should not be dragged into political battles, they said. "It is the duty of the defence forces to help those affected by natural calamities and our soldiers have been working tirelessly," a senior military official told AFP.

"Troops played a laudable role during the 1988 floods and the 1991 cyclone as well as the tornado last year," he said. Earlier this month, another official commented on the military's increasing role in government's development activities saying it was also their responsibility as "we are part of this nation."

He said such work also helped improve the military's image tarnished by coups and military-backed governments. Mrs. Zia blasted Sheikh Hasina's ruling Awami League government Friday for allegedly failing to give adequate relief to the cyclone victims and said her government had quickly fanned up to the previous 1991 cyclone, one of the worst in decades which left more than 139,000 people dead.

4 killed in clash between rebels, Mexican troops

ACAPULCO, Mexico (R) — Four people were killed and three wounded Saturday when left-wing guerrillas ambushed Mexican troops in a mountainous area of the southwestern state of Guerrero, the government said.

A Defence Ministry statement said the clash took place just after 3 p.m. local time (2000 GMT) when rebels from the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR) at-

tacked troops near the town of Tepozotalco.

The statement said two army sergeants and two guerrillas carrying AK-47 assault rifles died in the clash, which took place about 100 kilometres east of the state capital Chilpancingo.

Three army doctors were also injured in the ambush, which the statement said came as the army patrol returned from helping victims of a heavy hailstorm in the region.

Passengers on a bus who witnessed the clash, however, said the incident was not an ambush but an attack by troops who surprised EPR rebels handing out propaganda leaflets to drivers on the road.

One official told Reuters that 10 troops were wounded in the attack, four of them seriously, but the higher number could not immediately be confirmed.

The news became public when a taxi driver picked up a police radio transmission reporting the attack and confirming that the guerrillas had been distributing propaganda along the road.

A state police officer said the authorities had started an intensive ground and helicopter search for the guerrillas.

The clash was the first reported this year between the military and the EPR.



Rescue workers examine bodies from a burned-out shopping complex in Indonesia's South Kalimantan provincial capital of Banjarmasin Sunday. At least 136 people were killed in violence which engulfed the city Friday, including 130 who died after being trapped in the shopping complex after it was set ablaze by rioters (Reuters photo)

Death toll from Indonesia riots reaches 136

JAKARTA (AFP) — At least 136 people have died in election clashes which degenerated into mass riots in the south Kalimantan capital of Banjarmasin, police said Sunday, as the search for more bodies pressed on after nightfall.

"We will continue our search into the night," Sergeant Pangaribuan of the Banjarmasin police told AFP by phone.

A senior officer, who declined to be named, was quoted by a local source as saying police had found the charred remains of 131 people in the Mitra Plaza shopping mall, one of hundreds of buildings torched or damaged in the riots.

An employee of Banjarmasin's Islamic Hospital said Sunday that four people had died from either burn or stab wounds at two other locations, while another source said one person died Sunday at the Ulin Hospital. Another Banjarmasin police officer, Sergeant Giyo, said rescue teams had yet to search the smouldering five-storey Junjung Buih department store as it was "still too hot to enter."

Giyo said 181 people had been arrested in connection with the riots, which erupted on the last day of Indonesia's campaign period ahead of the May 29 elections.

He said police forensic scientists were attempting to identify the charred bodies from Mitra Plaza.

"Most were just bones or ashes, charred beyond recognition. It is very difficult to do the identification," he said. Sergeant Ali Badui said earlier the Mitra Plaza victims "were most likely those who tried to loot, as customers and employees had already left Friday afternoon when it was not yet on fire."

Catholic Church sources said Sunday evening that many people were still looking for missing relatives. Hospital sources said that about 100 people have been treated for riot injuries.

The source said that the city was tense but calm at nightfall with most shops closed and neighbourhood patrols keeping watch for possible unrest.

There was still sporadic violence Saturday night despite tight security and barricades.

The authorities have set an 8:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. curfew on the city.

Thousands of people Friday took to the streets of Banjarmasin, which has a population of around

500,000, following clashes between supporters of the Muslim-led United Development Party (PPP) and the ruling Golkar Party. They burned and looted markets, department stores, churches, a Buddhist temple, hotels, government and Golkar offices, over 100 vehicles and hundreds of homes.

"The rioters seem to be mostly people unhappy with Golkar," a church source said, adding that many of the minority Christian and ethnic Chinese "seem to be targets" in the unrest.

While almost 90 per cent of Indonesia's 200 million people are Muslim, the country guarantees freedom of religion.

Military spokesman Brigadier General Slamet Supriadi, quoted by the Antara news agency, blamed the unrest on "certain people who want to see the general elections fail."

The Banjarmasin riots came on the last day of campaigning for the May 29 elections, the worst upheavals in the violence-wracked campaign period, which began April 27.

Mass unrest Friday also hit over a dozen cities throughout the country, including the capital. At least six people died in campaign-related unrest in West

and East Java, reports said.

South Kalimantan Governor Gusri Hasan Aman said Saturday the damage could reach hundreds of billions rupiah (millions of dollars), Antara said. Before Friday's riots 126 people, including three security officers, had died mostly from campaign-related traffic accidents.

There has been virtually daily violence during the election campaign, dubbed the worst in more than 20 years. Analysts have said that escalating campaign violence mirrors the people's growing discontent with the ruling government, citing people's frustration over economic and political disparity.

Indonesia's three official parties — Golkar, PPP and the Indonesian Democracy Party — will contest 425 seats in parliament Thursday. Another 75 seats are allocated to the military.

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Russia rises to defend Central Asia from Taliban

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russia, the powerful guardian of former Soviet Central Asia, has threatened a "firm riposte" if the armed Taliban invade the territory of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

The Russian warning comes amid a state of alert in the Central Asian republics as the Taliban moves relentlessly forward in neighbouring northern Afghanistan, making key military gains.

Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the three former Soviet states bordering Afghanistan, signed a joint security treaty with Russia during a CIS summit in 1992.

Russia, which keeps thousands of men on the border with Afghanistan, warned the Taliban movement Saturday against violating the borders of former Soviet republics.

To do so would immediately set off a collective security mechanism which links Russia to these nations, it said in a declaration cited by ITAR-TASS news agency.

Invigorated by Russia's statements, Tajikistan said Sunday it would be able to repel any Taliban attempt to invade it.

For Moscow, the stakes are high: If the fundamentalist Taliban were to spread its influence in Central Asia, where Islam is the predominant religion among non-Russians, it would undermine Russia's own position in the region.

"The Taliban's objective is to weaken Russia and put pressure on Iran," a spokesman for the Afghan embassy in Moscow told Echo Moscow Radio early Sunday.

"Even if they don't attack the south of the CIS militarily, the Taliban can spread Islamic fundamentalism in the region," he said, echoing Moscow's fears.

Russian Border Guards defend the southern border of Central Asia, which for more than 2,000 kilometres runs along the northern edge of Afghanistan.

On Sunday Interfax, citing an unnamed source at the Russian Border Guards' headquarters in Kyrgyzstan, said some 5,000 Russian guards deployed in the republic were on the alert.

He said, however, that in the event of an attack they would be "unable to ensure ... the security of the southern border."

Kyrgyzstan is separated from Afghanistan by Tajikistan.

Taleban and allies sweep across north Afghanistan

MAZAR-I-SHARIF (AFP) — The Taliban Islamic militia aided by its allies pressed on with its relentless march across northern Afghanistan Sunday capturing two more provinces after routing one of its main opponents to seize this key stronghold.

As the Taliban took over military bases in Mazar-i-Sharif, the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) said pro-Taliban forces had gone on to capture Kunduz and Samangan provinces further east of the city.

The latest victories by the hardline militia has won it control of 80 per cent of the country's territory and all of the main cities since it first emerged on the scene in November 1994.

Heavy fighting was going on Sunday between the Taliban backed by troops of General Abdul Malik, who revolted against Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum last Monday, and an Israeli Muslim Commander Jaffer Naderi in Baghlan province, it said.

Aid workers confirmed the report saying fighting erupted late Saturday in Baghlan close to Pol-e-Khomri on the road leading to Kabul via the Salang Tunnel.

The province is one of the last still outside the Taliban's grasp.

But AIP said local commanders staging a rebellion in Kunduz hoisted white flags of the Taliban Islamic militia early Sunday, after they were seen fluttering Saturday in Mazar-e-Sharif.

The pro-Taliban commanders "disarmed" troops in Kunduz, which had been jointly controlled by forces of ex-President Burhanuddin Rabbani and Gen. Dostum's Uzbek militia, together with mujahedeen of various factions, AIP said.

Monday's defections left the anti-Taliban alliance in disarray, prompting the Taliban to launch a huge offensive to capitalise on the moment.

A Pashun commander said here Sunday that Gen. Dostum fled for "a foreign country," while his forces ran away in face of the Taliban march into the city.

Turkish television reported Gen. Dostum arrived in Ankara Sunday for talks with Turkish officials.

The remaining alliance forces of the pro-Iranian Shiite group, the Hezb-e-Wahdat, were reported to be surrounded by the Taliban in the central province of Bamian.

Mr. Rabbani's troops, commanded by Ahmad Shah Massoud, were dug in in the three northeastern provinces of Takhar, Badakhshan and Baghlan.

Taliban fighters on jeeps and tanks Saturday entered Mazar-e-Sharif, Gen. Dostum's main stronghold, meeting little resistance.

There were bursts of gunfire in celebration as the Taliban and the forces allied to the Islamic militia entered the city.

A Taliban official in Kabul also said Gen. Dostum had fled and white Taliban flags were flying in Mazar-e-Sharif.

A Pashun commander, who called himself Kargari, told AFP here about 5,000 fighters had taken Mazar-e-Sharif.

They were commanded by a General Gul Mohammad, one of the leaders of Monday's rebellion against Gen. Dostum, which

has left his forces scattered and in disarray.

The fighters first took Sheberghan, the principal town of Gen. Dostum's native province, leaving Gen. Dostum's defence system in tatters.

AIP said pro-Taliban troops from northern Balkh province also entered Aibak, the capital of Samangan after severe fighting outside the city.

The private monitoring service said 11 opposition fighters were killed and more than 200 arrested. Another 250 surrendered to the attacking force.

No independent confirmation was immediately available.

Sources said heavy fighting was going on in Baghlan where Mr. Naderi's militia was resisting the Taliban's entry into the Ismaeli base. But cut off from their allies and demoralised by the Taliban's relentless thrust into opposition-held areas, Mr. Naderi's troops were unlikely to hold out for long, analysts said.

On Sunday the Islamic warriors were taking control of the chief installations in Mazar-e-Sharif, moving into the barracks emptied by their adversaries.

Portraits of Gen. Dostum were torn down from the main crossroads by troops who entered the town late Saturday without a fight.

The whereabouts of Mr. Rabbani and Commander Massoud, both of whom are hated by the Taliban, were unclear Sunday.

Gen. Dostum, who arrived in Ankara early Sunday, will stay in Turkey "for some time," a Turkish official said.

"Dostum will stay in Turkey for some time but he has not applied for political asylum," said Ayvaz Gokdemir, a parliamentary deputy from Turkish Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller's party and a personal friend of the Uzbek general.

"After his defeat, Dostum would either stay in Afghanistan and die there, or escape and continue his struggle from another place," Mr. Gokdemir told reporters here after meeting the general briefly.

"Dostum preferred the second option," Mr. Gokdemir said, adding: "He is very tired now."

Sources said the plane carrying Gen. Dostum, who is accompanied by a few aides and personal guards, took off from his former stronghold of Mazar-e-Sharif in northern Afghanistan after midnight and directly flew to Ankara, arriving at 7:00 a.m. (0400 GMT).

Earlier the ministry said the evacuation of all Turkish citizens from Afghanistan was continuing and Turkey was "carefully following developments."

Gen. Dostum, accompanied by an 18-member team, had talks with a Turkish Foreign Ministry official Sunday morning, diplomatic sources said.

Gen. Dostum, who is of ethnic Turkic origin, traditionally has close ties with Turkish leaders.

Turkey, which currently has a consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif, may close the representation after completing the evacuation of its citizens in Afghanistan, one diplomatic source said.

NATO leaders, Yeltsin to sign security deal

PARIS (R) — NATO leaders and Russian President Boris Yeltsin sign an historic pact in Paris this week intended to lay finally to rest the suspicions of the cold war and allow the alliance to expand eastwards without creating new tensions.

The "founding act on mutual relations, cooperation and security between NATO and the Russian Federation" sets up a NATO-Russia council to bring Russia to the centre of a new emerging European security order.

Based at NATO's headquarters in Brussels, the council gives Russia a voice, but "not a veto" in the rapidly changing European security landscape which will soon see former Warsaw Pact countries enrolled as members of the West's military alliance.

Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, three post-Communist nations that formerly belonged to the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact, are expected to be offered NATO membership at an alliance summit in Madrid in July.

Romania and Slovenia also hope to be in the first wave of new entrants.

Alliance enlargement has been strongly opposed by Moscow and critics in Russia say the act, painstakingly negotiated by alliance Secretary-General Javier Solana and Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, fails to meet their concerns.

Diplomats say the Paris signing ceremony, a U.S. gesture to French President Jacques Chirac who is under fire for bringing his own country closer to NATO's military wing, will be largely ceremonial.

"There will be a lot of back-slapping and smiles and very little else. It is a

best deal he could get and received strong assurances no foreign troops or nuclear weapons would be placed on the territory of the new members.

Russia, which will be represented by a permanent ambassador at the council, can raise virtually any issue it wants although — crucially — the deliberations of the council, which will meet twice-yearly at foreign and defence minister level, will not be binding on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

President Bill Clinton, who arrives in Paris Monday, has hailed the deal as "an historic step closer to a peaceful, undivided, democratic Europe." Mr. Yeltsin says it means expansion will not threaten Russia's security.

Russia is also set to gain a raft of other benefits, from inclusion in meetings of a new group of eight leading industrialised countries to cooperation on ballistic missile defence systems.

Mr. Clinton, a strong advocate of enlargement, sees the process as righting the wrongs of the Yalta conference at the end of World War II when most of Eastern Europe was left to come under the "zone of influence" of Josef Stalin's Soviet Union.

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The deal with Russia and enlargement are to be followed by the creation of an Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council for some 27 other partnership countries, many of which also want NATO membership but are unlikely to be admitted.

Those include the three Baltic states.

Last week, Russia warned it would have to review everything if NATO tried to grant membership to former outposts of the now-defunct Soviet Union.

"The NATO-Russia Founding Act does what we have wanted it to do ... which is to secure Russia within Europe," U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Friday.

"We have made great strides in the U.S.-Russian relationship." The United States hopes its proclaimed "partnership" with post-Soviet Russia will finally materialise in the wake of the agreement called the Founding Act on mutual relations, cooperation and security.

"We have nothing whatsoever to fear from consultation with Russia," the administration's chief policymaker on Russia, Strobe Talbott, said last week.

"Unlike Germany in 1919 and again in 1945, Russia in 1997 is not a defeated power," he argued.

"Quite the contrary, its people and its reformers deserve credit, support, gratitude and patience from all of us for their role in defeating the Soviet Communist system."

While Russia still opposes NATO enlargement, U.S. administration officials feel the groundwork has been laid for discussion and that the alliance may even consider extending membership to Russia some day.

"Looking into the long-term ... it would be very mistaken to exclude Russia or any other country," said Mr. Talbott, the deputy secretary of state.

Few in Washington worry that Russia's drive to improve ties with China will result in a new power struggle in which Moscow will be forced to "Asianise" itself and join forces with Beijing.

State Department officials view Russia and China primarily in competition with each other for access to Western markets and investors and do not take the possibility of a defence alliance seriously.

Central Asia has kept a close eye on events in Afghanistan ever since the Taliban entered Kabul at the end of September last year, forcing government forces to flee the Afghan capital.

Over the past few months both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have openly supported anti-Taliban forces and denounced the threat of "Islamic contamination."

Only Turkmenistan, a small republic bounded on the southeast by Afghanistan, is trying to remain neutral.

On Sunday Tajik President Emomali Rakhmonov summoned his top security advisors to discuss the situation.

Besides concern over a Taliban attack, the Central Asian states also fear that refugees fleeing the Islamic militia will come pouring in from the other side of the border.

According to Tajik Border Guards, more than 100,000 people were already massed at the Afghan border at the end of April.

He said a new government would be announced by the end of the day.

A spokesman at the government offices said Mr. Kabbah had been flown by helicopter to neighbouring Guinea, the usual refuge for ousted Sierra Leonean heads of state.

Cpl. Gborie, who identified himself as a spokesman for the soldiers, called for the return to Sierra Leone of Foday Sankoh, leader of the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF), who is currently in Nigeria seeking the help of its leaders in ending the civil war that began in Sierra Leone in 1991.

Poles vote on new constitution

WARSAW (AFP) — Poles voted Sunday on a new constitution which is expected to be approved in spite of criticism from the Roman Catholic Church and its allies in the solidarity trade movement.

At a voting booth in central Warsaw only a dozen men, who were working Sunday, had showed up in the first half hour, although 2,500 people are registered here.

"I voted yes," said one security agent in his fifties outside the cooking school where the booths are stationed. "Poland must have a new constitution, good or bad. Otherwise there's anarchy."

It's a Communist constitution, which the church has criticised. For me, that's enough to reject it," said a

young man who refused to say what his job was.

The new basic law, already approved by both houses of parliament in a joint session on May 2, will replace that promulgated in 1952 and amended several times since.

Some 28,000 eligible voters are being asked to say "yes" or "no" to the question: "Are you in favour of adopting the constitution of the Polish Republic voted by the national assembly on April 2 1997?"

The text is the fruit of a difficult compromise between the ex-Communist majority and the parties which emerged from the anti-Communist solidarity, the Liberal Union for Freedom and the Leftist Labour Union.

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Lesson from Iran's elections

THE LANDSLIDE victory of the moderate culture minister, Mohammad Khatami, over the conservative speaker of parliament, Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri, as Iran's next president is significant on two counts. First, the results of the voting, in which the newly-elected president won 20.7 million votes of the 29.07 million total votes cast in Saturday's election shows beyond a doubt that Iran enjoys free and fair elections. It is almost unprecedented that in a developing country an opposition candidate would win, and with such a large margin over the establishment's candidate. This outcome is clear evidence that the Tehran regime has opted for free elections risking the loss of its ultra religious candidate, who was heavily and openly supported by the religious establishment.

Second, the stunning triumph of moderate forces over fundamentalist clergy in a country long viewed as totally and irrevocably committed to radicalism is not only a milestone in its history but indicative of people's inclination towards moderation and away from extremism. The outcome lends support to the proposition that under a pluralistic democracy, extremism cannot thrive for long. In the case of Iran, it was a coalition of centrists, women and youth that tilted the balance heavily in favour of Khatami. This should inspire other regimes in the region to have more faith in true and genuine democracy as the most viable tool to combat extremism. Given a real choice, people everywhere would naturally opt for moderate policies. It is only when governments attempt to manipulate election results or control the conduct of elections that people resort to choosing extremists and opposition figures to express discontent.

By any standard, the election of Mr. Khatami is a referendum on the 18 years of fundamentalist mullahs' rule. Iran's image stands to improve to a great deal regionally and internationally following Khatami's election. So would Tehran's relations with other countries, especially in the West where Iran was long viewed as irredeemably committed to anti-Western policies and ideologies. Riyadh was among the first countries to see a window of opportunity for improved ties opened by the election of Khatami. King Fahd was one of the first leaders in the region to send a warm congratulatory message to the newly-elected president. Other capitals including Washington no doubt have a certain degree of optimism at the outcome.

The fact that Iran has remained faithful to the constitutional rule of a maximum of two four-year terms for the elected president should spur other countries in the area to opt to limit the number of terms of office that presidents spend in office. There is a great deal to be learnt, therefore, from Iran's landmark presidential elections. While it is premature to label Saturday's election a "corrective revolution," there is no doubt its fallout would reverberate for a long time across the globe.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i daily Sunday bitterly criticised the Turkish government for the military invasion of Iraqi territory and said that the ongoing invasion threatens the future and shakes the credibility of the Welfare Party, the main partner in the present government coalition. Mohammad Khamroub said that by sending troops deep into Iraqi territory, Turkey seems to have started to implement a U.S.-backed Turkish-Israeli conspiracy against the Arab Nation after recently announcing plans for joint military exercises with the American and Israeli military forces. The writer said Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's silence over the Turkish invasion of Iraq and his recent statement that his government is keen on maintaining its membership in the NATO alliance and its continued efforts to join the European Union indicate that Turkey is intent on pursuing a policy hostile to the Arab states. Mr. Erbakan's statements conflict with those of his ministers who toured Iraq, Syria and Iraq, charged the writer. He said Turkey is clearly implementing a colonialist plot in the Arab region, backed by the U.S. and Israel, and its invasion of northern Iraq is not restricted to fighting off the Kurdistan Labour Party. The writer said that the Arabs should realise that their national security is threatened and their northern neighbour is carrying out a regional role detrimental to their future.

A WRITER for Al Arab Al Yawm blamed the United States for the present deadlock in the peace process, stressing that it is because Washington is shirking its responsibility as sponsor of the peace process that no progress is made on most tracks. Nicola Nasser said that when the peace process started, the U.S. was committed to ensuring its implementation and some progress was achieved, but later, the U.S. administration retreated from the role of active partner, causing the process to face an impasse and the U.S. credibility to erode. As a result of this weak American stand, added the writer, no progress has been achieved on the Israeli-Syrian or Israeli-Lebanese tracks; and due to Washington's open support for Israel's aggression and continued occupation of Arab lands at the United Nations, and its continued supply to Israel of military help to consolidate its hold on Arab territory, the American position did not achieve anything towards ending the Arab-Israeli conflict, said the writer. It is due to this American policy and its total bias towards the Jewish state that Israel continues to defy the world community and does not implement U.N. resolutions; and it is due to Washington's strategic alliance with Israel that Tel Aviv continues to deprive the Palestinians of their legitimate rights, said the writer. He said because of this policy, the United States bears the whole responsibility for any explosion in this volatile region.

Economic Review

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur

Progress in economy and change in mentality go hand in hand

JORDAN'S GROWTH prospective for the next decade have been nothing short of impressive, especially when taken within a regional context. Today, in light of its institutional and in spite of the regional changes, many policy makers claim that Jordan stands ready to leap towards the twenty first century as an emerging economy. But can the momentum be maintained? The answer is not simple to give.

In the period 1990-1995, Jordan sustained a growth rate of 6.6 per cent, the highest in the region. Egypt, on the other hand, which is considered today as the areas' most inviting economy, achieved only a 3.8 per cent growth, slightly more than half of Jordan's growth rate. Israel, sustained only a 6.0 per cent growth, to fall to second place. And it was not until last year that Jordan lost its first place rank to the UAE, mainly because of the rise in oil prices which gave oil-producing countries a great boon.

However, Jordan still enjoyed a lead over Egypt and Israel as its economy grew by 5.2 per cent in 1996, while those of Egypt and Israel achieved 4.2 per cent and 4.4 per cent, respectively.

Investment, which during 1989 declined to 22 per cent of the GDP, has been rising steadily, to arrive at 33.4 per cent in 1996, a much higher percentage than most of the nations of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region can claim. The Jordanian investment level increased steadily since 1989, through the flow of workers' remittances and savings, thus making Jordan still dependent in investment decisions on the rise and fall of oil prices. This necessitated the implementation of a strategy to enhance the economy's reliance on internal sources of finances, especially since the present level of investment must be maintained or even enhanced to sustain Jordan's future growth.

Several pieces of new legislation should ensure that Jordan's growth potential remains strong. The new

Companies and Securities Laws are part of the parcel of changes that are necessary to enhance the growth of the economy. The new Competition/Antitrust Law, which is to enter into force in a few days' time, will signal to the world and to Jordanian industrialists that competition is safe in Jordan and well guarded. The new Customs Law will make it easier for goods to flow in and out of Jordan. The Secured Financing Law will guarantee that anyone who wants to start a business does not need to be a millionaire or a landowner before he/she approaches the banks for credit.

In addition, the privatisation programme, which has been moving carefully so far and in some areas too carefully to significantly impact the economy, must come into play to encourage further investment in Jordan and to bring in badly needed foreign capital. Thus, not only is the government freed from operating inefficiently what should have been the private sector's endeavour in the first place, the world is also invited to participate in Jordan's drive to emerge.

Making the investment environment more friendly to business and broadcasting it to the whole world is the way forward. Better still, the safe investment climate and the potential for unhampered profits in Jordan should be advertised. Jordan must learn to market itself more effectively in the global market. This is the message that is constantly relayed to Jordan, either directly by well wishers or indirectly by competitors such as Egypt, which has done a wonderful job marketing Egypt to foreign investors.

If Jordan attains the goals that were set out in the 1996-98 IMF Structural Adjustment Programme, there should be no reason for it not to emerge into the next century with confidence. Unfortunately, this conditional aim has another constraint: mentalities have to continue to change with the economy; otherwise, it is business as usual.

Secrecy's high cost — suffering from deception

By George F. Kennan

PRINCETON, New Jersey — It is my conviction, based on some 70 years of experience, first as a government official and then in the past 45 years as a historian, that the need by the U.S. government for secret intelligence about affairs elsewhere in the world has been vastly overrated.

I would say that something upward of 95 per cent of what we Americans need to know could be very well obtained by the careful and competent study of perfectly legitimate sources of information open and available to us in the rich library and archival holdings of the United States. Much of the remainder, if it could not be found here (and there is very little of it that could not), could easily be nonsecretively elicited from similar sources abroad.

In Russia, in Stalin's time and partly thereafter, the almost psychotic preoccupation of the Communist regime with secrecy appeared to many, not unnaturally, to place a special premium on efforts to penetrate that curtain by secretive methods of our own. This led, of course, to the creation here of a vast bureaucracy dedicated to this particular purpose; and this latter, after the fashion of all great bureaucratic structures, has endured to this day long after most of the reasons for it have disappeared.

Even in the Soviet time, much of it was superfluous. A lot of what we went to such elaborate and dangerous means to obtain secretly would have been here for the having, given the requisite quiet and scholarly analysis of what already lay before us.

The attempt to elicit information by secret means has another very serious negative effect that is seldom noted. The development of clandestine sources in another country involves, of course, the placing and exploitation of secret agents in that country. This naturally incites the mounting of a substantial effort of counterintelligence on the part of the respective country's government.

This, in turn, causes us to respond with an equally vigorous effort of counterintelligence in order to maintain the integrity of our espionage effort.

This competition in counterintelligence efforts tends to grow into dimensions that wholly overshadow the original effort to positive intelligence procurement that gave rise to it in the first place. It takes on aspects which cause it to be viewed as a game, played in its own rights.

Unfortunately, it is a game requiring such lurid and dramatic character that it dominates the attention both of

those who practise it and of those in the press who exploit it. Such is the fascination it exerts that it tends wholly to obscure, even for the general public, the original reasons for it.

It would be interesting to know what proportion of the energies and expenses and bureaucratic involvement of the CIA is addressed to this consuming competition, and whether one ever stacks this up against the value of its almost forgotten original purposes.

Do people ever reflect, one wonders, that the best way to protect against the penetration of one's secrets by others is to have the minimum of secrets to conceal?

One more point. At the bottom of the whole great effort of secret military intelligence, which has played so nefarious a part in the entire history of great-power relationships in this passing century, there has usually lain the assumption by each party that if it did not engage to the limit in that exercise, the other party, working in secret, might develop a weapon so devastating that it could confront all others with the demand that they submit to its will "or else."

But this sort of anxiety is now greatly outdated. The nuclear competition has taught us that the more terrible weapons available, the more suicidal becomes any conceivable actual use of them. With the recognition of the implications of this simple fact would go a large part of the motivation for our frantic efforts of secret intelligence.

In this respect, too, this is really a new age. It is time we recognised it and drew the inescapable conclusions.

There may still be areas, very small areas really, in which there is a real need to penetrate someone else's curtain of secrecy. All right — but then please, without the erection of false pretence and elaborate efforts to deceive, and without, to the extent possible, the attempt to maintain "spies" on the adversary's territory.

We easily become, ourselves, the sufferers from these methods of deception. For they inculcate in their authors, as well as their intended victims, unlimited cynicism, causing them to lose all realistic understanding of the interrelationship, in what they are doing, of ends and means.

The writer, a former ambassador to the Soviet Union, is professor emeritus of historical studies at the Institute for Advanced Study. The article above is reprinted from The New York Times.

LETTERS

Better medical care for better Jordan

To the Editor:

TO LOSE a father so suddenly, and ironically while in the care of his professional colleagues, is very painful.

Four months ago, our father was advised by our family doctor to do catheterisation since he felt some chest pain. He went ahead and had it done at one of our heart centres in Jordan. The film showed calcification in three main arteries and he was advised by the doctors at that centre of the urgent need for a bypass operation. Our father was mentally and physically prepared to undergo the operation. He wanted it to be done at another heart centre, as he considered they had the best surgeon in Jordan, and showed them the film. He was told that the film was not enough to determine whether an operation was needed. Another catheterisation was recommended, and it was done at that centre. This was the first big mistake since it is medically not recommended to undergo the same procedure twice within a period of one month as it might cause kidney problems.

The doctors at the second centre assured my father that there was no need for an operation. After one month, though, he developed pulmonary oedema (his lungs were filled with fluid due to heart failure). He was immediately admitted at the first centre and the doctors there did their utmost the whole night to help him out of the serious situation. Eventually they succeeded and his lungs were partially cleared.

Then the doctors there urged him to undergo an operation immediately.

Since he still had complete trust and faith in the ability and expertise of the surgical team of the other centre, he was transferred there again.

After ten days of tense waiting the operation was done successfully. However, ten days later he started to have kidney problems that prompted the need for dialysis. That made him extremely weak; the procedure causes heart fatigue and a patient in his condition should have been kept in the Intensive Care Unit.

That same night, and for still unknown reasons, our father was found on the floor with complete heart arrest. After the necessary resuscitation he was rescued but, alas, left in a deep coma for four weeks. During that time we were all hoping for his recovery, as we waited by his bedside talking to him and praying.

Our father passed away on May 11. It was so hard on everybody because we came to believe that he would have had a better chance had he done the operation the first time he was advised to do so.

Having told this sad and tragic story, and for the sake of all of us in this country, we think we have the right to ask the following questions:

- When will doctors be responsible for their action?
- Can a doctor become an administrator and practise medicine efficiently?
- Why should an egotistical competitive behaviour among doctors and centres victimise patients?
- Why have care, humanity, understanding and honesty seem to be misplaced in the medical profession?
- Until when should we remain silent over obvious mistakes in the medical industry?

The family of the late Dr. Tawfiq Karadsheh, Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

Human Rights File

Amendments to press law, inaction on election law make government move 'suspect'

By Waleed M. Sadi

THE CONTROVERSIAL amendments to the 1993 Press and Publications Law naturally stirred a hornet's nest at all levels. While there is a consensus that the articulation of a new law on the freedom of the press was overdue, there is a near unanimity that any changes to the existing legislation on the subject should be adopted by Parliament.

It could be easily argued that there was nothing so pressing and urgent about the issue as to justify the by-passing of Parliament in its consideration. Jurists, I believe, would agree that a balanced and reasonable construction of Article 94(1) of the Constitution, which allows the Cabinet, with the consent of His Majesty the King, to enact temporary laws on matters that require immediate resolution, would preclude the resort to temporary laws in this instance, where the complaints, including the legitimate ones among them, would not qualify by any reasonable stretch of the mind as urgent or pressing to avoid irreparable harm.

The fact that the country has survived for the past four years under the conditions now complained about renders the subject vital but not necessarily urgent.

As the rule is to adopt laws through the normal legislative process, the exception to the rule needs to be interpreted in the strictest and the most conservative way. This reflects faithfully the international jurisprudence on legal interpretations.

The rationale submitted by the government to justify the expeditious manner of legislating on the subject ranges from fears of destabilising the economy of the country, including its currency value, to disrupting friendly relations with other states, especially Arab capitals, and hurting the reputation and image of the country. One particular economical factor was cited in defence of the argumentation in favour of the precipitous adoption of the amendments: it was the case of "erroneous" reporting by a tabloid on the currency exchange rate of the dinar and its link to the U.S. dollar. The government contends that such reporting has cost the government no less than \$200 million.

Whether in fact the complained about report did in fact contribute to such a colossal loss or not, the criterion being applied by the government in this regard could lead to the absurd conclusion that most of the reports published in the Wall Street Journal, for example, and which affect the exchange rate of the U.S. dollar and influence consumer and business confidence in the U.S. economy one way or another, should be censored.

No one in his right mind would suggest that Washington close down the Wall Street Journal or any other daily or weekly which expresses a positive or negative opinion or assessment on the state of the economy as long as it is not made with malice or criminal intent or it is so groundless as to render its publication and dissemination as bordering on criminal negligence.

As for the possible disruption of friendly relations with other countries, unless we interpret this criterion in a sensible manner, it would preclude the Jordanian press from even reproducing U.N. reports about human rights violations in these countries for fear that we may violate the sensitivities of such countries.

Regarding the image of the country, there is nothing that would hurt this image more than to give an impression that the process of democracy in the Kingdom is reversible. The Kingdom has prided itself in recent years as a bastion of pluralistic democracy and has won wide acclaim for this role. To now put that image in jeopardy would be reckless.

Of course if the ultimate

aim behind the recent legal adventure is to contain the elusive free and responsible press, then even this objective needs to be put in proper perspective.

Article 10 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression". The article goes on to say that "this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through the media and regardless of frontiers." It will be noticed that this right was not qualified by the word "responsible" in the declaration for fear that the term could serve as a licence for undue press restrictions.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is generally viewed as part of the growing soft customary international law due to its widespread acceptance but is not parcel of the hard customary international law.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which codified the declaration into binding legal principles that are accepted now as part of the hard customary international law, however, contains a qualifying language.

Article 19 of the ICCPR, which is binding on Jordan after its ratification in 1978, stipulates in paragraph 2 that "everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds". Paragraph 3, however, qualifies this right by the following language: "The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 carries with it special duties and responsibilities." The paragraph goes on to add that "it may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary, i.e., (a) for respect of rights or reputation of others; (b) for the protection of national security or of public order, or public health or morals."

This is where statesmanship is most needed: How to strike a reasonable balance between the right to free press and the right to protection from its abuses while keeping in mind that the rule is to enjoy freedom of the press and the exception is to limit that right by restraints that could be regarded as proportionate.

The cumulative effect of the just incorporated amendments to the 1993 law give the distinct impression that the desired balance is lacking. Over and above the prohibitive financial constraints on the right to own and operate a weekly, for example, the overall spirit of the new guidelines appears to counter the principle of free reporting.

As the Jordan Times editorial stated on May 21, under the new conditions there will always be hesitations to "report, comment, analyse, print photos or cartoons" on what happened, for example, the day before during the sit-in of journalists protesting the new law for fear of violating the recent amendments because it has become relatively easy to argue that the country's security, stability or even reputation would be damaged by any such dissemination of information.

I must hasten to add that the non-adoption of a new election law to govern the upcoming elections, especially with regard to complementing the one-person, one-vote criterion, makes any new move by the government a suspect. Pessimists would now have grounds to submit that the overall tone of the new government is to prepare the necessary ground work for the next elections that are most favourable to its own perspectives. I do not believe that this is the case. Yet the government of Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali needs to send fresh signals by way of confidence-building measures to assure the people that it is genuinely devoted to the continuation of democracy as the previous governments were.

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Bank time deposits in dinars rise by JD141m during four months

By Samir Ghawi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Central Bank (CBJ) of Jordan has reported a sharp increase in time deposits in Jordanian dinars of 5.9 per cent (or JD141 million). The bank said deposits in dinars rose from JD2.38 billion at the end of December 1996 to JD2.52 billion at the end of April 1997.

According to the combined balance sheet compiled by the CBJ for all licensed banks and financial institutions in the Kingdom, the time deposits in foreign currencies dropped by 2.5 per cent (or the equivalent of JD48 million), from the equivalent of JD1.89 billion to the equivalent of JD1.85 billion.

The combined balance sheet as of April 30, 1997 also showed drops in the amounts of savings. Savings in Jordanian dinars declined by JD10 million from JD601 million at the end of December 1996 to JD591 million at the end of April 1997.

The decrease in foreign currency savings was significantly less, the equivalent of JD3 million. (From the equivalent of JD181 million at the end of last year to the equivalent of JD178 million at the end of April 1997).

Asked to comment on the situation, Jawad Hadid, the general manager of the Arab Banking

Corporation (Jordan), told the Jordan Times that the difference between the interest on the dinar and on other currencies was a main factor.

"This main factor received added importance as a result of the 14 per cent statutory reserve imposed by the Central Bank on foreign currency deposits with commercial banks," Mr. Hadid said.

He explained that this statutory reserve has raised the cost of foreign currencies by 80 basis points, or 0.8 per cent, and as such, banks could not maintain giving their clients the same interest rates offered internationally on dollars and other currencies.

"This higher cost widened the spread in favour of the dinar and gave a push to the dinar-denominated deposits," Mr. Hadid pointed out.

He noted the stability of the dinar and saw that as a factor which encouraged residents of the West Bank to place their money in long-term dinar deposits.

Mufleh Aqel, a senior executive at the Arab Bank stressed the element of confidence in the economic performance and monetary stability for the increase in dinar-denominated time deposits. He also highlighted the high interest on the dinar, the lower interest on foreign currencies and the foreign exchange stability as also being important factors.

Another major shift in funds took place in the credit facilities during the first four months of the year as lending in foreign currencies shot up by 22.5 per cent or the equivalent of JD45 million. The direct credit facilities extended at the end of 1996 totalled the equivalent of JD200 million but the amount rose to the equivalent of JD245 million by the end of April 1997.

Lending in dinars did not rise much as the increase during the four months was only 0.2 per cent or JD8 million (from JD3.49 million to JD3.50 million).

Mr. Aqel said it was natural that borrowers sought loans in foreign currencies because of the lower interest in this area but he saw the slight rise in dinar credits as a negative factor for the economy.

Mr. Hadid viewed the higher foreign currency lending from the following perspectives: The low interest charges compared to the interest on the dinar, the minimum risk from such borrowing due to the fixed exchange rate with the dollar as well as the monetary stability, and, the general weak market conditions which discouraged business persons from borrowing in dinars at high cost.

Asked about rumours of banks curbing lending, Mr. Hadid denied such talks but indicated that the central bank is being tough

with some banks where there are high concentrations of credits.

Other figures of interest that appeared in the combined balance sheet of all banks were in the areas of letters of credit and guarantees. The amount of letters of credit outstanding at the end of 1996 was the equivalent of JD427 million at the end of 1996 but the amount was down to the equivalent of JD353 million at the end of April 1997.

This JD74 million, or 17.3 per cent, drop could be seen as a start of a decline in imports to narrow the trade deficit gap but a senior Central Bank official cautioned against reading too much into the figure. He noted that the explanation for such a fall may well be the withdrawal of the Ministry of Supply from the market as a major buyer of basic food-stuffs.

The official said that a longer period of monitoring the data is required to ensure that a real decline in imports is taking place.

As for guarantees, the amount outstanding at the end of April 1997 was JD542 million, up 6.7 per cent or JD34 million over the JD508 million total at the end of 1996. In foreign currency, guarantees outstanding at the end of last month amounted to the equivalent of JD225 million, an 8.9 per cent or JD22 million at the end of December.

Government gives private sector green light to set up unspecialised free zones

By Ghaila Alul
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The government has approved in principle the establishment of unspecialised private sector free zone areas, according to the Free Zone Corporation Director General Marzouq Hadid.

Mr. Hadid told the Jordan Times on Saturday that the new free zone areas will be entitled to the same benefits enjoyed by other public sector free zones in the Kingdom.

He said privately owned free zones "will

be exempted from income taxes for the first 12 years, in addition to being exempt from export and import fees."

He said that the private sector can also benefit from exemptions on the value added when their goods enter the local market.

This is not the first time the government allows the private sector to establish and direct free zone areas, explained Mr. Hadid.

He said that each of the four free zones already operating in the Kingdom is specialised in one

activity. "Private free zones will attract foreign industries and joint ventures and will also ensure the fair distribution of development benefits to all areas," said Mr. Hadid.

He stressed that establishing a private free zone area is complicated, adding that the private sector has to comply with the conditions and the regulations imposed by the corporation.

According to Mr. Hadid, the applicant should provide the proper infrastructure for the project, employ and train Jordanian workers as

well as provide comprehensive insurance on his/her inventory.

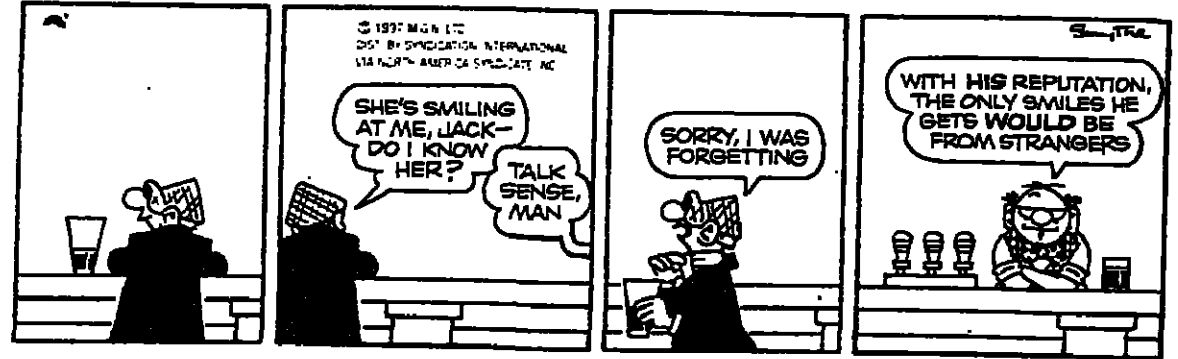
Mr. Hadid said three companies have already applied to establish free zone areas, but added that these applications still need to be approved by the government.

"The corporation would study the applications and their compliance with the conditions and regulations before sending them to the Cabinet for the final approval," explained Mr. Hadid.

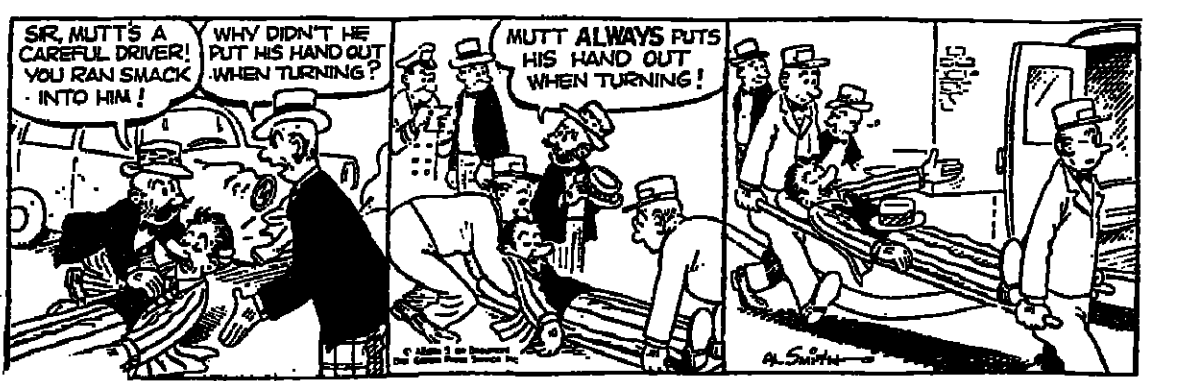
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	FRF	ESP
US Dollar	1.0000	1.8935	0.6118	1.4048	115.80	1.3749	166.70	1.9035	5.7080
DE Mark	0.5905	1.0000	0.3610	0.8295	68.38	0.8116	983.88	1.1239	3.3701
GB Sterling	1.6344	2.7700	1.0000	2.2912	188.54	2.2471	2724.05	3.1111	9.3292
CH Franc	0.7118	1.2047	0.4350	1.0000	82.41	0.3780	1185.59	135.18	4.0603
JP Yen	0.0086	1.4612	0.5277	1.2121	1.0000	1.1863	14.38	164.24	4.9249
CA Dollar	0.7273	1.2459	0.4443	1.0400	1.19	1.0000	1185.59	14.38	4.1968
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0165	0.3687	0.8842	1441.13	0.8244	1.0000	11.41	3.4227
NL Guilder	0.5253	0.8834	0.3212	0.7380	60.80	0.7221	875.37	1.0000	2.9979
FR Franc	0.1752	0.2966	0.1071	0.2408	20.27	0.2408	33.34	33.3400	1.0000

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	IRP	EGP
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7080	3.7504	0.3770	3.8400	0.3020	3.6728	1637.50	3.3850
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	1.0000	5.2972	0.5326	5.1412	0.4266	5.1876	2171.61	4.7811
GB Sterling	0.2666	0.1888	1.0000	0.1005	0.97	0.0805	0.98	409.96	0.9026
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8781	3.9485	1.0000	3.66	0.8011	3.74	4078.47	8.9793
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	1.0303	1.0303	1.0000	0.8630	1.01	422.39	0.9299
Kuwait Dinar	3.3113	2.3444	12.4185	1.2483	12.05	1.0000	12.16	5091.06	0.9289
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1928	1.0211	1.0128	0.9911	0.8822	1.00	418.62	0.9216
Lebanese/1000	0.85	0.4605	2.4393	0.3452	2.3675	0.1964	2.3888	1.0000	2.2016
Egyptian	0.2954	0.2092	1.1079	0.1114	1.0753	0.0892	1.0850	454.21	1.0000

Energy		
Oil	Last	Today
Brent	20.50	20.50
W. Texa	21.20	21.45
Bonny	20.50	20.50
Dubai	19.10	19.28
UL Gas	208.00	207.00

Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	IRP	EGP
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4517	0.16314	0.37484	0.30033	0.2666	0.4517	0.16314	0.37484
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.46123	0.16669	0.38276	0.31567	0.2723	0.46123	0.16669	0.38276
KW Dinar	3.3113	5.60852	2.02583	4.65549	383.73	3.3113	5.60852	2.02583	4.65549
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.49438	1.62311	3.72856	307.409	0.3770	4.49438	1.62311	3.72856
CY Pound	1.9753	3.3452	1.2081	2.7749	228.74	1.9753	3.3452	1.2081	2.7749

Metal Prices		
Metal	Spot	Offer
Gold (oz's)	342.5	343
Silver (oz's)	4.73	4.75
Platinum (oz's)	389.2	390
AL (3 Months)	1637	1640
CU (3 Months)	2515	2520
Zinc (3 Months)	1360	1364
Lead (3 Months)	631	635
NI (3 Months)	7530	7550

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)									
Currency	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	12 Months	18 Months	24 Months	36 Months	48 Months
USD	5.56	5.68	5.81	5.96	6.09	6.22	6.35	6.48	6.61
GBP	6.19	6.38	6.56	6.82	6.99	7.16	7.33	7.50	7.67
JPY	0.46	0.47	0.50	0.54	0.57	0.60	0.63	0.66	0.69
DEM	2.89	2.95	3.01	3.14	3.19	3.25	3.31	3.37	3.43
FRF	3.22	3.38	3.42	3.45	3.49	3.52	3.55	3.58	3.61
CHF	1.25	1.48	1.52	1.55	1.60	1.63	1.66	1.69	1.72
ITL	6.65	6.62	6.60	6.45	6.43	6.41	6.38	6.35	6.32

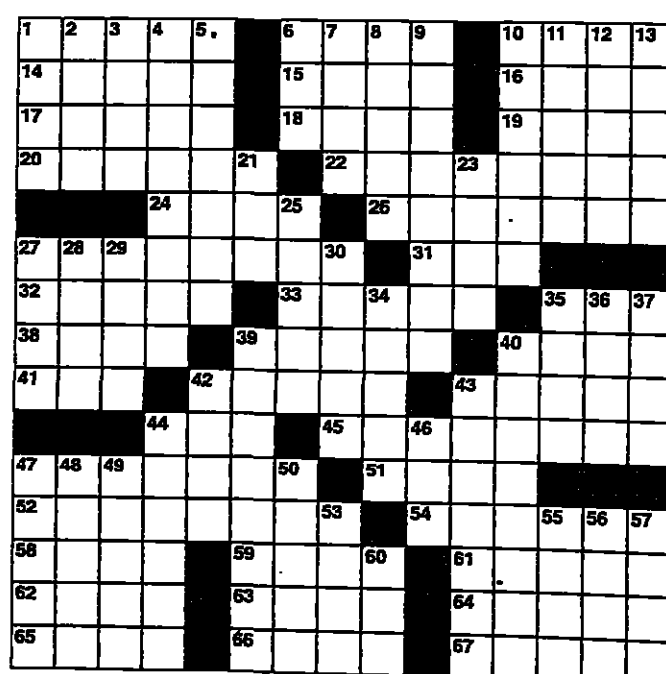
Main Equity Indices									
Index	Value	Change	% Change	High	Low	Open	Close	Settle	Prev. Close
New York DOW JONES	7346.91	67.78	1.21	7362.8	7298.78	7298.78	7346.91	7346.91	7346.91
New York S&P 500	847.03	11.57	1.38	848.49	835.66	835.66	847.03	847.03	847.03
London FT-SE 100	4661.8	10	0.21	4672.7	4652.1	4652.1	4661.8	4661.8	4661.8
Tokyo Nikkei 225	20009	131.61	0.66	20066.8	19907	19907	20009	20009	20009
Paris CAC 40	2762.9	21.25	0.78	2771.48	2742.01	2742.01	2762.9	2762.9	2762.9
Frankfurt DAX	3602.19	22.77	0.64	3605.28	3584.28	3584.28	3602.19	3602.19	3602.19

Energy		
Commodity	Spot	Delivery
Coffee (c/lbs)	277.08	Spot
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1479	Spot
Sugar (\$/ton)	326.6	Spot
Wheat (\$/ton)	159	Spot
Soya (c/lbs)	23.07	Spot
Tea (c/lbs)	155	Spot
Barley (\$/bush)	0	Spot
Rice (\$/cwt)	0	Spot

JOD Cross Rates			
Currency	Buy	Sell	Source: Central Bank of Jordan
US Dollar	0.708	0.710	
GB Sterling	1.1567	1.1625	
DE Mark	0.4172	0.4193	
CH Franc	0.5032	0.5057	
FR Franc	0.1239	0.1246	
JP Yen	0.6131	0.6162	
NL Guilder	0.3712	0.3731	
IT Lira	0.4242	0.4265	

THE Daily Crossword

- ACROSS
- In cold (deliberately)
 - Zounds!
 - Clean a pipe
 - Lovers' lane?
 - Went on horseback
 - Other
 - Glazier's licks
 - Water. Sp.
 - Romance in verse
 - Insect with pincers
 - Veteran employee
 - Pointed arch
 - White art
 - Most forbidding
 - Society page word
 - Certain exams
 - Behind time
 - After-hours bank: abbr.
 - Wren or hen
 - Largest asteroid
 - Mountain in Thessaly
 - Bribe
 - Main artery
 - It's a long story
 - Raggedy doll's name
 - Rule of thumb
 - Significance
 - Span
 - United States flag
 - Crowns
 - Shoppes type
 - Sports group
 - Gnome
 - Clairvoyant
 - Architect Saarinen
 - Rub out
 - Misplays
 - Football
 - Church council
 - Lasso
 - Europe's neighbor
 - Giacca
 - Sobering group?
 - Adds up to



by Eugene Puffenberger

05/13/97

Monday's Puzzle solved:									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70

- DOWN
- Cinematic piglet
 - Milano mood
 - Glacial ridges
 - Eastern hemisphere
 - Contrives
 - Memorable period
 - Kind of dancer
 - Grown-up
 - Blind alleys
 - Political system
 - Fragrant oleoresin
 - Something of value
 - British measure
 - Turn right
 - Canasta card
 - Chemical compound
 - Weeps
 - Combo
 - Lawman Wyatt
 - Fruit-filled pastries
 - Europe's neighbor
 - Ruler
 - Sobering group?
 - Adds up to
 - The Devil
 - Indigo plant
 - Arouses
 - Infuriates
 - Finesse
 - Forest creature
 - Aunt of "OklaHoma"
 - Snake
 - Welcome
 - Maneuverable, nautically
 - Horse hue
 - In addition
 - Luge or travois
 - Swab

HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR MONDAY, MAY 26, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Be sure to get all the necessary career activities out of the way today, so that you will have the days ahead much more freely. Leave yourself some time to spend later this evening and thereby your life less stressful.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Find a way today to improve your efficiency so you'll have more time for yourself and thereby not rushing around so much. A new contact can help your financial status later this evening, so listen carefully.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Study your obligations today, and take care of those which are most pressing. You will find that your mate is very supportive in your career activities, so show that you do appreciate his or her enthusiasm.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Make practical plans with your fellow associates today, and get their approval of your ideas before proceeding. Do something special to please your mate and he or she will show you how much you are appreciated.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Use some enthusiasm today when handling your more mundane chores, and you'll soon be finished. Take some time for personal pleasures later this evening, especially those with loved ones.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Make some special arrangements today to meet with fellow associates and devise a course of action for your success. Don't take any risks with your reputation or your health later this evening and thereby become prosperous.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) This is a good day today to take care of little tasks which need doing around the house or those connected with career activities. A close friend can offer some fine advice, so pick his or her brain.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Any communications or career activities will be successful today, however pleasure will be found only with loved ones. Visit a friend who is feeling poorly and make him or her feel much more content.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Seek out the advice today of an expert before you go on that little trip with a friend. Be sure you watch your budget later this evening, which could

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Business & Finance

Jordan Times, Monday, May 26, 1997 9

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

About 217 projects benefit from Jordan Loan Guarantee Corporation in 1996

**** THE JORDAN Loan Guarantee Corporation (LGC) has helped in setting up or expanding about 217 economic projects during 1996 as the number of credit applications executed or under processing has increased by 64.4 per cent, Board Chairman Ziyad Fariz told the general assembly.**

The corporation received a total of 264 applications last year, 98 applications more than the number in 1995, for a total of JD5.2 million in amounts granted and JD2.9 million in guarantees provided by the corporation.

The services sector accounted for the highest portion of loan guarantees as they totalled 131 applications or 60.4 per cent of the total applications that were executed or under processing in 1996. The number was only 47 applications or 35.6 per cent in 1995.

In second and third places were the industrial, crafts and vocational sector for 34.6 per cent (75 applications) and the agricultural sector for five per cent (11 applications).

Of the total number of applications, 125 or 57.6 per cent were within the Amman area compared to 81 applications (61.4 per cent) in 1995. Males benefited from 158 guarantees while 17 guarantees were given to females. Other parties got the remaining 42 loans.

The corporation also extended 17 housing loans amounting to JD532,000 (of which the guaranteed amount was JD397,200) to limited and middle-income beneficiaries.

A total of 63 credits which were guaranteed by the corporation until the end of 1996 failed and the JLCG paid JD337,000 in compensation for 51 of those credits while nine remained unpaid. Three cases were still under study when 1996 ended. Of the amounts paid, the corporation managed to collect JD147,700 from the former beneficiaries.

During 1996, the corporation paid JD129,300 in compensation for 14 cases which were not successful. It was able to collect JD38,200 from 25 beneficiaries whose businesses failed and were compensated in the previous year.

According to the annual report, the Jordan Loan Guarantee Corporation posted a gross income of JD0.95 million last year (JD663,700 in 1995). This amount boiled down to a net profit of JD428,750 (JD396,600 in 1995) after deducting operational costs and other expenses. Of this net profit, the general assembly approved distributing JD322,600 in cash dividends (at a rate of four per cent to shareholders).

Other financial data shows total assets rising from JD8.8 million in 1995 to JD10.6 million in 1996. Total shareholders equity also increased from JD6.9 million and JD8.5 million (Al Ra'i + Al Aswaq).

Qatar stock market opens for business

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The Gulf state of Qatar has launched its long-awaited bourse project in a bid to attract capital and cushion the impact of volatile oil prices on its economy, officials said Sunday.

Trading in the Doha Securities Market (DSM) started a few days ago and the floor will be inaugurated officially Monday.

Share dealing will be restricted to Qataris but foreigners will be allowed later to buy shares in mutual funds to be created by trading companies.

"The inauguration of the bourse is a landmark event in Qatar's economy," an official from the DSM told AFP.

"It will boost domestic savings, attract foreign capital, expand share-trading and open up new investment fields in the country," he said.

Officials said 17 banks and companies were listed on the market, with a capitalisation of around six billion Qatari riyals (\$1.6 billion).

Before the exchange was opened, turnover, or the value of traded shares, totalled around 325 million riyals (\$89 million) in 1996.

"We expect turnover to sharply grow because the official floor will give more confidence and security to investors. Our projections are that turnover will grow by between 15 and 25 per cent a year," the official said.

"The floor has already started operations but it will undergo further development. It is a semi-computerised trading hall but there are plans to turn it into a sophisticated, fully-computerised floor," he added.

Qatar, a small OPEC oil producer, had considered opening a stock exchange for several years but it had been held up until the new emir, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, ratified the project.

The bourse was part of overall reforms pledged by Sheikh

Hamad to revive Qatar's economy following an accumulation of foreign debt and other economic woes blamed by the emir on his predecessor.

Reforms included improved investment laws and measures to hasten development plans at Qatar's oilfields and giant gas facilities.

As a result, multi-billion-dollar projects have been launched by the government and foreign partners to tap the massive natural gas resources of more than 10 trillion cubic metres, the third largest after those of Russia and Iran.

"Share-dealing in the bourse will be limited to nationals in the first stage. Foreign investors will be allowed to own up to 49 per cent of the shares of mutual investment funds at a later stage," a bourse official said.

"There are no plans for the time being to permit expatriates to trade in the shares of the listed companies. But this could be considered in the future, depending on the market and economic circumstances in the country," he added.

Qatar is the fourth Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) state to set up a formal share market after Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has finalised bourse laws and the project is set to materialise soon.

Saudi Arabia, by far the biggest and wealthiest GCC member, shut its exchange more than eight years ago due to opposition from its influential Muslim spiritual leadership.

But share-dealing is now conducted through the most advanced bank network in the Arab region and the market is the biggest in terms of capitalisation, which stood at \$45 billion at the end of 1996.

GCC countries are trying to link their stock markets in line with an economic pact signed a year after the creation of a political, defence and economic alliance in 1981. The pact calls for the creation of a common market, the first in the Middle East's contemporary history.

Arafat forms committee to handle financial mismanagement scandal

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has ordered a commission set up to remedy financial mismanagement in his self-rule government which last year involved more than \$320 million, officials said Sunday.

Thayeb Abdul Rahim, secretary general of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), told the official WAFA news agency that Mr. Arafat had taken personal charge of investigations into the irregularities.

The violations, involving most ministries and departments of Mr. Arafat's autonomy government, were revealed in an official PNA audit which was published in the Palestinian press over the weekend and confirmed Sunday by the head of the audit committee, Jarar Al Kidwa.

Mr. Kidwa said a 600-page report submitted to Mr. Arafat detailed his monitoring committee's discovery of the improper accounting

or mismanagement last year of \$326 million, equal to nearly 40 per cent of the PNA's annual budget.

Saturday, the Al Hayar Al Jadid newspaper, considered close to Mr. Arafat, said the audit report spoke of \$223 million in mismanagement funds, but Mr. Kidwa told AFP the figure was \$326 million.

"President Arafat has studied the report thoroughly and had ordered the audit department to continue its investigation and to correct the functioning of the PNA ministries and officials," Mr. Abdul Rahim said.

"Arafat will personally follow up on what was in the report," he said.

Mr. Abdul Rahim said a committee would be formed to examine the allegations "and will put proposals to President Arafat on necessary measures to stop all these unacceptable violations."

He did not say who would be named to the committee

or when it might release its conclusions.

Mr. Kidwa said his committee's investigation uncovered financial and administrative negligence, but he stressed that its report did not accuse specific ministers of acting criminally for personal financial gain.

"Many wrong things were done and there will be penalties, but no one said that there were ministers who put money into personal bank accounts or wasted public money," he told AFP.

His report did, however, accuse certain ministries of receiving funds from foreign donors without including them in the budget.

Much of the waste, according to Mr. Kidwa, was due to the failure to collect customs levies on imports, including \$50 million of import duties that should have been paid on cars used by PNA officials.

He also said huge sums of money were wasted on international telephone

calls by the ministries.

The PNA has already moved to remedy this problem by cutting most international lines and putting a \$150 ceiling on monthly mobile telephone bills for PNA officials, he told AFP.

Mr. Kidwa said the audit report would be presented to Palestinian deputies and ministers in the coming days.

The audit came amid growing criticism of corruption and high-spending by senior Palestinian officials.

The elected Palestinian Legislative Council last week complained that corruption was commonplace and accused officials of wasting funds on expensive villas and luxury cars.

Palestinian teachers last month held an unprecedented strike against the PNA partly motivated by what they saw as the unfair gap between their living standards and those of high PNA officials.

Saudi mulls opening bourse more to investors

ABU DHABI (R) — Saudi Arabia is actively reviewing its bourse, including possible measures to further open its doors to foreign and Arab Gulf investors, the kingdom's finance minister has said.

"It's clear that we are gradually calculating the moves to open up the market. We want to get the advantages of opening up the market without the dis-

advantages, the volatility," Ibrahim Abdul Aziz Al Asaf told Reuters.

"We are moving in the direction of openness, but at the same time we want to make sure we will do it the right way," he said.

Mr. Asaf said the kingdom was considering gradually opening up its bourse, the biggest in the oil-rich Gulf, to international investors by approving fur-

ther equity funds in which foreigners can own units.

Saudi American Bank, 30 per cent owned by Citibank in March received central bank approval to set up the Saudi Arabian Investment Fund Ltd — the first fund to allow foreign participation in the bourse. The market is so far restricted to Saudis and other Gulf Arabs.

"This is obviously the first closed-ended fund and we might have more of these..." Mr. Asaf said.

The closed-end fund, the size of which has yet to be announced, will be listed on the London Stock Exchange.

Analysts have predicted the Saudi American Bank fund would usher in similar funds, for which some banks are awaiting central bank approval.

Bank employees defraud clients for JD3.5 million

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A Jordanian couple suspected of defrauding bank clients by taking their deposits in return for a "promised high percentage of profits" were arrested by police as they entered Jordan from the Syrian border, Chairman of Jordan Kuwait Bank (JKB) Sufian Sartawi said Sunday.

Mr. Sartawi said no loss was incurred by the bank where one of the suspects was employed.

He told the Jordan Times that a woman working in the bank's letter of credit department, managed to deceive several clients by convincing them to deposit their money with her. In return the client was told that he/she would receive

high return.

The fraud was discovered when several clients attempted to withdraw their money but discovered that the woman has left the country. The suspect allegedly issued cheques in the amounts of a total JD 3.5 million to these clients. The cheques turned to be fraudulent.

The banks on which the cheques were drawn refused to honour them.

Mr. Sartawi said that the woman's husband was an accomplice in the scheme and was working at the Arab Bank Ltd., before he was arrested by police.

The Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) calculates that the use of fraudulent cheques has increased 10 per cent in 1996.

The CBJ deputy governor, Mohammed Jasir, said the bank has undertaken several measures to avoid such a fraud.

Mr. Jasir said the CBJ has also recommended that prison terms and fines for defrauders be reduced so that payment on fraudulent cheques can be made.

OECD countries agree to criminalise business bribery

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States and its fellow industrial nations have agreed on a plan to criminalise business bribery of foreign public officials, U.S. officials said.

The pact, reached at the Paris-based Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), came after several years of protracted negotiations and should be a big plus for U.S. companies competing in world markets, they said.

"This agreement is a major step forward in curbing international bribery," Commerce Secretary William Daley said in a statement.

U.S. companies have been prohibited by law for two decades from paying bribes to foreign officials to win business in developing countries and elsewhere. But their competitors in other industrial nations have not been subject to such restrictions, putting U.S. firms at a disadvantage.

The payment of kickbacks to government officials to win business contracts is rampant throughout much of the developing world. Washington reckons that U.S. companies lost out in some 100 business

deals worth about \$45 billion over the last two years because of bribes by their competitors.

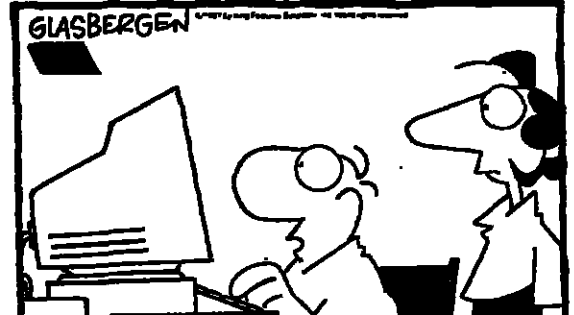
"Bribery is a major distortion of international trade and has a corrosive effect on economic and political development," Mr. Daley said.

Under the pact reached, the 29 nations that make up the OECD agreed to introduce legislation by April 1, 1998, to make bribery of foreign public officials in international business transactions a crime, U.S. officials said.

They also agreed to open negotiations promptly on a treaty to accomplish that same end, the officials said. The negotiations are supposed to be wound up by December, with the treaty ratified and in force by the end of next year.

The two-track approach appeared to be a compromise between the United States on the one hand and France and Germany on the other. The two European countries had balked at introducing legislation to criminalise bribery before an international treaty was in place, out of fear that their companies would be put at a competitive disadvantage.

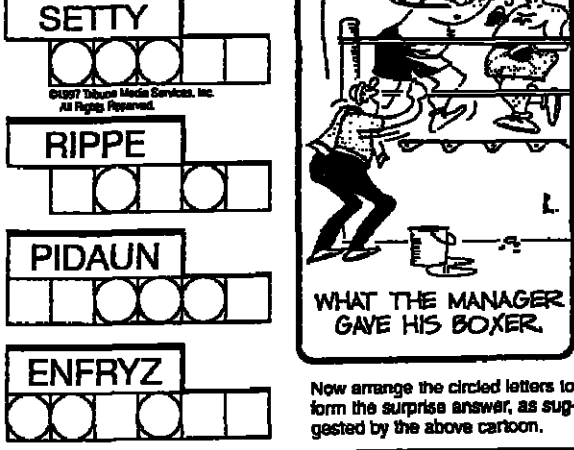
THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"Thirty years ago groups had names like The Beatles, Monkees and Byrds—that was before computers checked our spelling."

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



Answer here: (Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: SOGGY BELLE MUSTER UPSHOT
Answer: A hard working forist can watch his business do this — BLOSSOM

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Faisali-Wihdat final postponed — for now

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The long awaited football match between Al Wihdat and Al Faisali in the final of the Federation Shield Championship will be postponed until the Jordan Soccer Federation (JSF) decides on whether to accept Al Faisali's demand to enlist foreign referees for the match, a JSF spokesman said Sunday.

Saleh Irsheidat, JSF vice-chairman, said that the decision was made because Al Faisali refused to play against his arch-foe without foreign referees hinting that the JSF has implicitly approved the request.

Mr. Irsheidat told the Jordan Times that the final decision will be taken during a JSF session headed by Prince Abdullah Ben Al Hussein, chairman of the JSF, who is scheduled to arrive here Sunday evening.

"We have notified the two clubs that the match will not be played tomorrow (Monday)," Mr. Irsheidat said adding that during the coming JSF session, the "mechanism and regulations of how to enlist foreign referees will be decided."

Mohammed Jweibir, Al Faisali's secretary-general, told the Jordan Times that his club was adamant to have foreign referees "because we want to avoid previous problems resulting from wrong decisions by some Jordanian referees as it happened in previous matches with Al Wihdat," which might create skirmishes between the fans of the two clubs.

Mr. Jweibir said that his club decision "does not insult local referees," and emphasised that in 1981 Al Wihdat refused to play against Al Faisali without foreign referees.

He added that whatever the decision, "we will not play against Al Wihdat without non-Jordanian referees."

Al Wihdat's chairman Bahjat Shihab confirmed that Monday's match has been postponed and said that his club has no objection to bring foreign referees for their match with Al Faisali.

"We have been notified by the JSF that the match will not take place as previously scheduled on Monday," said Mr. Shihab noting that Al Faisali's chairman Sultan Al Udwan has sent three requests to the JSF requesting the foreign referees.

"It is a very sensitive match for both sides and necessary arrangements (including foreign referees) should be taken to avoid any troubles," Mr. Shihab said.

During last year's Premier League, the two clubs fans clashed following the match causing serious damages in facilities at Al Hussein Youth City and cars parked near the stadium. Many fans were arrested and blacklisted because of their behaviour.

The unrest led to imposing stiff security measures during another encounter between the two sides earlier this year.

Novotna humbles Seles in Madrid final

MADRID (R) — Czech Jana Novotna completed a stunning 7-5 6-1 victory over top seed Monica Seles in the Madrid Open final Saturday.

Second seed Novotna trailed 5-3 in the first set but turned the match around by winning eight successive games. Seles never recovered.

"I played very intelligently and she made more errors than normal," Novotna said after retaining her title.

Seles said she had lacked concentration and missed many opportunities to break Novotna's serve.

Seles lost service seven times and in the last four games of the first set she was only able to win four points.

Both players needed treatment from a WTA physiotherapist during the match — Novotna for a pulled muscle in her left thigh and Seles for a strain in her heel.



With Chicago Bulls' forward Dennis Rodman (L) looking on, Bulls' guard Michael Jordan (23) and Miami Heat centre Alonzo Mourning (33) go after a rebound in the third quarter. The Bulls defeated the Heat 98-74 in Game 3 of the Eastern Conference Finals at the Miami Arena to take a 3-0 series lead (Reuters photo)

Bulls embarrass Heat to take commanding 3-0 series lead

MIAMI (R) — Michael Jordan scored 34 points and Scottie Pippen added 21 as the Chicago Bulls embarrassed the Miami Heat 98-74 on Saturday to take a commanding 3-0 lead in the best-of-seven NBA Eastern Conference finals.

The defending champion Bulls can advance to the NBA finals for the fifth time in seven years with a victory here Monday.

The rampaging Bulls are 10-1 for the first three rounds and have held the Heat under 80 points in all three games.

No NBA team has ever recovered from a 3-0 series deficit and Miami is not about to be the first, if Saturday's performance is any indication.

The Heat embarrassed themselves, committing a near-record 32 turnovers and missing the record for fewest field goals in a playoff game with their last bucket. Instead, they tied the post-season futility mark with 21 field goals.

Voshon Lenard scored 14 points and Alonzo Mourning added 12 to lead the Heat.

Miami scored 25 of its points in a fourth quarter that was played almost exclusively with reserves from both teams after Chicago took a 72-49 lead into the final period.

At one point early in the fourth, Jordan and Pippen had combined to score as many points as the entire Miami team.

"I shot the ball well," said Jordan. "I found my rhythm early in the first half and I think everyone fed off that. We controlled everything today," Jordan said.

Graf winds up French Open build-up with victory

STRASBOURG (R) — Steffi Graf completed her short build-up to the defence of her French Open crown by winning the Strasbourg tournament with a 6-2 7-5 victory over Croatian youngster Mirjana Lucic in Saturday's final.

Graf, who made a comeback from a three-month injury layoff in the German Open in Berlin last week, where she was bundled out by Amanda Coetzer of South Africa in the quarter-finals, said she felt much fitter this week.

"I don't want to put a percentage on my fitness for the French Open, but the truth is that after this week my physical strength has been much better," Graf said after the final, which lasted one hour and 23 minutes.

"Obviously, it was important for me to be successful here and find my game again. I was very tired after three hours on court yesterday so I'm happy I could remain strong for the entire match today."

The World No. 2 managed to avenge her devastating German Open defeat by Coetzer, in which she only took one game, with a three sets victory over the South African in Friday's semi-finals.

Graf, seeded second at the French Open, said that over



Steffi Graf

the next few days before her opening Roland Garros match against Argentine Paola Suarez she would

work on her service, her speed and keeping calmer on court. Lucic, who was 15 in

March, will not be playing in Paris, but she has already made a quick impact on the women's game.

With no world ranking yet because this was only her second professional event, Lucic reached her second successive final after winning at Bol in Croatia. She beat Coetzer in the semi-finals there to become the youngest woman since Jennifer Capriati in 1990 to win her first tournament.

Capriati was 14 when she won in Puerto Rico, but new WTA rules state a player must now be 15 before being allowed to play professionally. A player's first world ranking is calculated after three tournaments.

The Strasbourg organisers worked out that had this been her third tournament Lucic would get a world ranking of about 102 and had she won it would have been in the 90s.

Lucic said that to play Graf in a final was a dream come true. "This was a huge experience for me," she said.

Graf said she was not as good as Lucic when she was 15. The Croatian was more developed physically, bigger and taller.

"She hits hard on both sides. At that age my forehand was much better than my backhand," Graf said.

Injured Gascoigne doubtful for World Cup qualifier

MANCHESTER (R) — Paul Gascoigne is doubtful for England's World Cup qualifier against Poland next week after suffering a calf injury in the last minute of his country's 2-1 friendly win over South Africa Saturday.

England gained the result they wanted in the first-ever meeting between the two sides but Gascoigne, playing his first international for seven months, failed to finish the match after a rash tackle by substitute Linda Buthelezi.

Gascoigne was carried off on a stretcher although England coach Glenn

Hoddle said it was too early to say if he would miss the Polish game.

"He has taken a heavy blow on the calf and the injury is being heavily iced," said Hoddle. "It was a bad tackle, a rash tackle, but the sort that sometimes happens in football."

"I am a hard player and that's the way that England play and how I play," responded Buthelezi. "I think it was unfair of the referee to book me for the tackle, but afterwards I went up to Gascoigne and hugged him. He's a football man, he knows the game."

As well as worries over

Gascoigne, England midfielder Jamie Redknapp was carried off with an ankle injury and is also doubtful for the match in Poland.

Gascoigne, who will be 30 on Tuesday, had his best match for England since last summer's Euro '96 and went close to scoring with a second-half free kick. He also played some penetrating long passes through to his forwards and orchestrated the 75th minute goal which Ian Wright scored to clinch England's victory.

Gascoigne's free-kick was headed on by Paul Scholes to Wright who was allowed to continue despite the ball hitting his arm and netted a trademark goal from close range.

South African manager Clive Barker said afterwards: "All the players are adamant it was handball, although from my place in the dugout I couldn't see the incident."

Hoddle made eight changes from the side that beat Georgia in a World Cup qualifier last month and the team that meets Poland in another qualifier


next Saturday is unlikely to bear much relation to his latest selection.

His men went ahead when Lee fired home at the second attempt for his second goal for his country in his 10th international.

South Africa, the African champions, flattered to deceive for much of the match with some fancy footwork from Doctor Khumalo and John "Shoes" Moshoeu in midfield, but stunned England with a 43rd minute equaliser from Phil Masinga, once of Leeds United, who headed home after being set up by an overhead kick from Moshoeu.

A near capacity crowd of 52,000 created a great atmosphere on a sunny evening at Old Trafford, staging its first England home match since 1938.

Wright, Teddy Sheringham and Lee all went close for England, while Eric Tinkler unleashed a superb drive in the first half which flew inches wide of Nigel Martyn's right-hand post.



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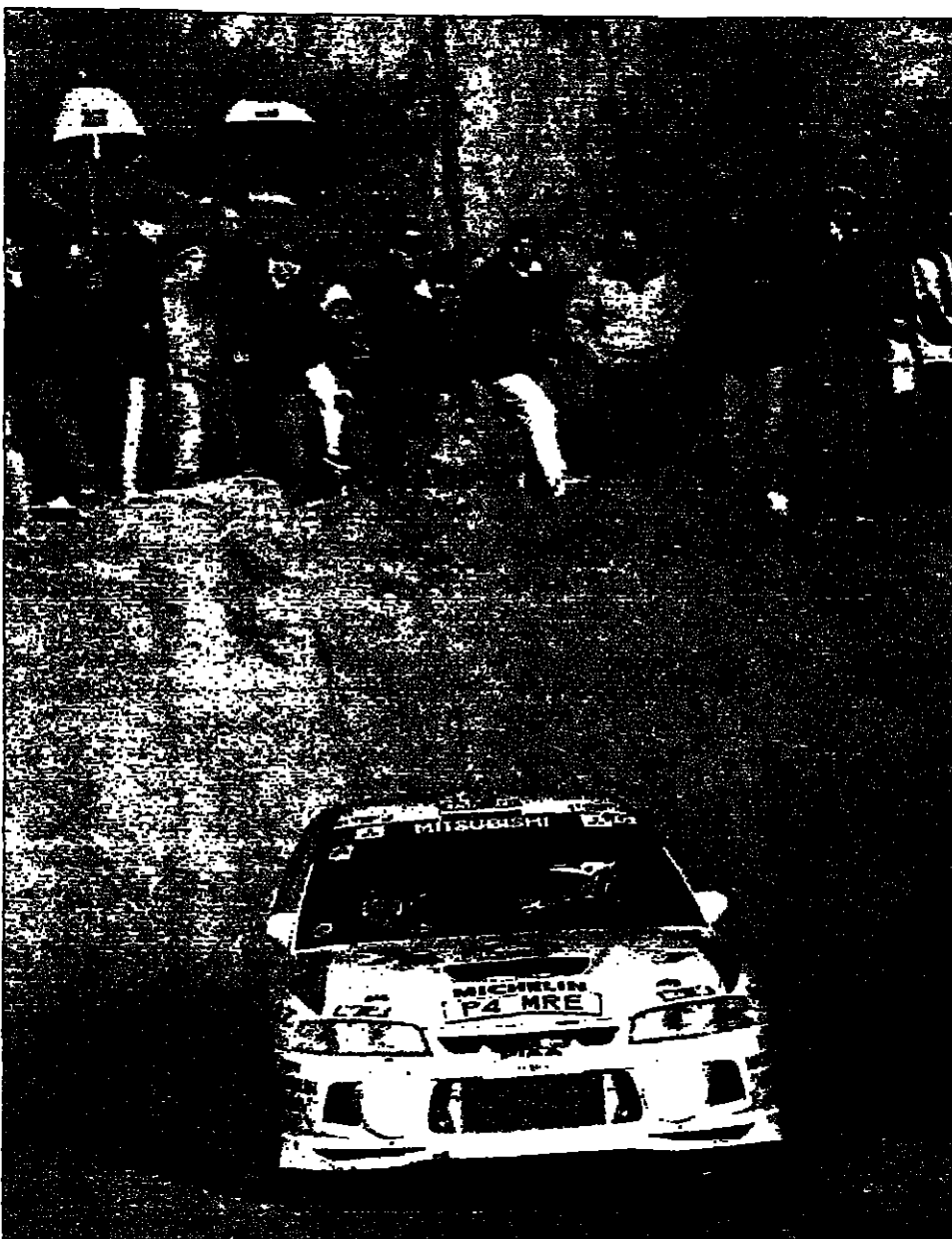
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Finnish Mitsubishi Lancer driver Tommi Makinen drives his car during the last stage of the XVII Argentine Motor Rally. Makinen won the rally and heads the worlds drivers' championship with 38 points (Reuters photo)

Makinen wins Argentine Rally

CORDOBA, Argentina (R) — Reigning world rally champion Tommi Makinen of Finland, driving a Mitsubishi, won the Rally of Argentina on Saturday. Briton Colin McRae came second in a Subaru while Swede Kenneth Eriksson also in a Subaru, finished third.

World Championship standings

Drivers	
1. Tommi Makinen (Finland) Mitsubishi	38 Points
2. Colin McRae (Britain) Subaru	32
3. Equal Carlos Sainz (Spain) Ford	18
3. Equal Piero Liatti (Italy) Subaru	18
5. Kenneth Eriksson (Sweden) Subaru	14
6. Armin Schwarz (Germany)	11
7. Gilles Panizzi (France) Peugeot	8
8. Richard Burns (Britain) Mitsubishi	6

Manufacturers	
1. Subaru	64
2. Mitsubishi	46
3. Ford	29

With 49 days left for Pan-Arab Games, Jordanian delegation still not finalised

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — With less than two months left for the start of the 8th Pan Arab Games in Beirut July 13-27, a shroud of uncertainty still prevails over the fate of the event in general and the Kingdom's delegation in particular.

While the Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) has set May 31 as the final date for naming the delegation, it is not yet clear in what games Jordan will participate — a fact that hinders serious preparation for the biggest Arab sports gathering.

The eleven countries which have so far confirmed participation are Syria, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Sudan, Lebanon, Yemen and Jordan.

JOC technical Committee Chairman Sari Hamdan Sunday said there was also some speculation that the Games would be postponed for several reasons. "These are unconfirmed reports and we have not heard any official confirmation yet," Hamdan told the Jordan Times.

Lebanese officials last month announced that work was still under way on facilities including the main stadium where the opening ceremony will be held.

The Lebanese minister of youth noted that the main sports city will cost \$72 million adding that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait had helped in financing the project while pledges from other Arab countries had not been received yet.

He said that the Arab League had contributed \$500,000 and the Arab Council of Ministers of Youth \$150,000.

Venues include facilities in Beirut, Tripoli, Beqaa, Qafra, Sidon, Ein Sa'ada, and Jounieh. In order to cut down on cost, each country will pay for its teams' accommodation. Participants will also be allowed to leave after finishing their respective events.

Dr. Hamdan said an evaluation team from the JOC was in constant contact with participating sports federations to evaluate their teams' preparation.

"We have received indication that some federations are seriously training for the event while others seem unlikely to be able to qualify according to JOC criteria," he said.

"Federations must demonstrate that their teams are ready and have the chance to attain a halfway, if not advanced standing at the competition."

Jordanian sports officials have expressed full support for the Games hosted by Lebanon, noting that the Jordanian delegation will actively take part in the largest gathering of Arab youth since the event was last held in Syria in 1992.

Nineteen events have been set for the Games excluding handball, gymnastics, body building, hockey, diving and water polo for technical and financial reasons.

Jordan announced that its athletes would be competing in 17 of the 20 events at the Games and sent the organisers a preliminary list of the 257-member delegation including 130 men and 37 women athletes, 64 officials and coaches, and 26 referees.

The number was later reduced to 150, cutting down the number of athletes in some games and excluding referees who will be invited by the organising committee.

Jordan's preliminary entry form includes participation in athletics, basketball, karate, fencing, swimming, taekwondo, table tennis, boxing, cycling, equestrian, soccer, weightlifting, judo, freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling, shooting, tennis and volleyball.

Other events at the Games include golf, yacht-

ing and kick-boxing.

Basketball will be the only team sport Jordan's women will take part in. Individual sports are athletics, fencing, karate, swimming, taekwondo and table tennis.

Participation in the Games is expected to cost around JD100,000. Participating federations will pay 40 per cent of the expenses incurred by the Ministry of Youth for their teams.

Recently Jordan has received preliminary approval to host the 9th Pan-Arab Games in 1999 following a meeting of ministers of youth from Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, officials from the Arab League and the Arab Sports Federation.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the visit of the ministerial committee of the Council of Arab Ministers of Sports entrusted with the task of inspecting Lebanon's preparations for the Games.

Then Jordan's Minister of Youth Mohammad Daoudieh noted that hosting the Arab Games will be a privilege for Jordan. It will also be a great chance for serious preparations for the 2000 Sydney Olympics and an opportunity for the Kingdom to improve its existing sports facilities.

Jordan had finished 9th overall in the last Pan-Arab Games with 1 gold, 6 silver and 6 bronze medals.

Hosts Syria topped the medals table with 48 gold, 31 silver, 37 bronze followed by Egypt and Algeria.

The event was due to be held last year but was postponed after the Israeli bombardment of southern Lebanon.

The Pan-Arab Games were held in Alexandria 1953, Beirut 1957, Casablanca 1961, Cairo 1965, Damascus 1976, Morocco 1985 and Damascus 1992.

Klinsmann wins title with Bayern

MUNICH (R) — Juergen Klinsmann fulfilled a childhood dream by winning his first German League title with Bayern Munich Saturday.

But even so, he said, he did not regret leaving the club, which has been nicknamed "Hollywood City" because of its constant drama.

Germany's captain, who is giving up a lucrative contract to join Italy's Sampdoria because he is unhappy with the way he has been treated, played an important role in Bayern's championship-winning 4-2 victory over VfB Stuttgart. Afterwards Klinsmann said: "This is the thing you

dream about doing as a small boy. I'm going to enjoy it for a few days. It is a bit of a happy end."

"But I don't regret leaving. So many things have happened. There are so many different philosophies in football. And mine did not fit in here."

Klinsmann was often at the centre of criticism during the season. He hated the bickering and backstabbing which was part of everyday life at a club which has earned the "Hollywood" tag this season because its arguments were always in the news. The forward was embroiled in a public row with club captain and former World Cup hero Lothar Matthaus.

The defensive tactics of Italian coach Giovanni Trapattoni often frustrated the player intensely.

Klinsmann's feelings boiled over in the tense final run-in when he kicked in an advertising sign after being substituted during one match, leaving the field shouting and cursing. Soon afterwards it was announced that he was joining Sampdoria.

Chairman Franz Beckenbauer, who has often criticised the team in public, said he hoped there would be fewer battles next season.

Auxerre, who won the league and French Cup double last season, ended an ultimately disappointing season with a 3-1 home win over their successors as cup holders, relegated Nice.

Strasbourg also go into the UEFA Cup after winning the League Cup, while Nice become the second non-championship club in successive seasons to represent France in the European Cup Winners' Cup after Third Division Nimes.

PSG snatch European Cup place with late goal

PARIS (R) — Veteran midfielder Vincent Guerin struck a dramatic 89th-minute winner to give Paris St Germain a 2-1 home win over Strasbourg on Saturday and a place in the European Cup next season.

PSG fell behind to a 49th-minute goal by midfielder Olivier Dacourt before equalising in the 63rd minute when defender Paul Le Guen blasted home from a free kick tapped to him by captain Rai.

They had looked on their way out with Nantes, then equal on points but ahead on goal difference, holding champions Monaco 1-1 away on the last night of the league season.

"It was a match that

summed up our season, a difficult match," Rai said. "We have managed to overcome the obstacles and surpass our limitations."

But the luck that had carried Nantes through a 30-match unbeaten run ended with Guerin's goal in Paris and a goal disallowed in a close offside decision in the principality that would have put them in front.

In the end, with Nantes pushing everyone up, including teenage goalkeeper Mickael Landreau, Brazilian Striker Anderson broke away in injury time to give Monaco, unbeaten at home in the league this season, a 2-1 victory with his 19th league goal of the season.

Claude Makelele had put

Nantes ahead in the fifth minute and Scotland's John Collins equalised for the champions with 14 minutes to go.

It was the first time that Landreau, who made his debut at 17 and four months in October had been on the losing side in 29 first division games.

Nantes coach Jean-Claude Suaudeau, whose side go into the UEFA cup, said: "The result in itself is bad because it does us out of the Champions' League."

"We maybe lacked a bit of bite in the second half but what we've done this evening at the champions' ground is really very good."

General Manager Robert Budzinski said: "We can be

satisfied, given our catastrophic start to the season."

"To beat Paris at the line would have been a great performance. To win at Monaco, too..." midfielder Jocelyn Gourvenne said.

Lyon midfielder Ludovic Giuly hit a hat-trick as his side crushed Marseille 8-0 at home, avenging a 7-0 defeat away to the same team in 1990 and also making up for their 7-0 loss to 1996 champions Auxerre in October.

The victory equalled the highest number of goals scored in a match this season. Bordeaux beat PSG 5-3 in November.

Alain Caveglia, taking his tally to 19, and PSG-bound French international striker Florian Maurice scored two

apiece as Germany goalkeeper Andreas Koepke suffered a nightmare behind a sieve-like defence.

Marseille ended a disappointing season without an away victory for only the second time in their history.

Bordeaux, with Jean-Pierre Papin scoring his 16th goal of the season in a 2-1 win at Le Havre, secured a place in the UEFA cup along with Metz, whose 1-0 win at home to relegated Lille edged out European Cup quarter-finalists Auxerre.

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Canadian Jacques Villeneuve salutes from the podium after winning the Spanish Formula One Grand Prix May 25 at the Montmelu racetrack near Barcelona. Canadian Jacques Villeneuve won the race with Alesi third and also French Olivier Panis in second place (Reuters photo)

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In a blow to Chirac, opposition left leads in 1st round poll upset

PARIS (R) — The French left scored a major upset on Sunday, outpolling Prime Minister Alain Juppe's ruling centre-right coalition in the first round of a parliamentary election, polling institutes said.

The strong protest vote against two years of austerity and rising unemployment under Mr. Juppe left the outcome of next Sunday's decisive second-round runoff wide open, they said.

Projections broadcast as soon as voting ended at 8 p.m. local time suggested France could be heading for a period of difficult "cohabitation" between a possible left-wing government and Conservative President Jacques Chirac.

The opposition Socialists, Communists, extreme-left and other-left candidates were set to capture between 40.6 and 41.6 per cent of the vote, with the ruling RPR-UDF coalition and other moderate-right candidates scoring between 36.1 and 37.1 per cent.

"This result is not good for the current majority. I think it is a warning, a manifestation of disappointment, discontent and irritation," a gloomy Justice Minister Jacques Toubon said on television.

The extreme-right National Front was set to win between 14.8 and 15.1 per cent, its strongest showing in a parliamentary election, with ecologists polling around five per cent.

Most of the 577 national assembly seats were expected to go to a runoff, where the behaviour of National Front supporters and of the roughly 32 per cent of voters who abstained on the first round will be crucial.

The Sofres polling firm forecast that the RPR-UDF coalition would win 255-

287 seats next Sunday, short of the 289 required for a parliamentary majority, it projected the Socialists would win 250-270 seats, their Communist allies 21-30 seats and the National Front 0-3 seats.

The BVA institute put the RPR-UDF between 255 and 275, well short of a majority, with the Socialists taking 250 to 270, the Communists 15-20 and the National Front 0-2.

Both projections could leave the Communists holding the balance of power. They might even give a handful of extreme-right deputies a powerful position.

The projected vote appeared to be a severe blow to Mr. Chirac, who wavered the future of his presidency after two years in office on calling a snap election, 10 months before his vast parliamentary majority needed to face voters.

"This is a very bad score for the RPR-UDF. I think one can say that the president has lost his gamble," anti-Maastricht left-winger Jean-Pierre Chevènement crowed on television.

Mr. Chirac said he took the decision because he needed a "new Elan" to lead France into a single European currency, a policy rejected by both the Communists and the National Front.

Voters had a choice between a centre-right platform promising reforms to scale down state control and an opposition pledging vigorous state job creation and a shorter working week to attack record 12.8 per cent joblessness.

A total 6,389 candidates, including a record 1,469 women, vied on Sunday for seats in the chamber.



French Conservative President Jacques Chirac steps out the voting booth before casting his vote at the Sarrazin City Hall, central France, on Sunday, in France's first round legislative election (Photo by AFP)

Mr. Juppe, shown by opinion polls last year to be the least popular prime minister since 1958, had to submit to an unexpected identity check when he voted in the southwestern city of Bordeaux where he is a candidate.

When a polling official asked him to identify himself, Mr. Juppe replied: "Usually, it's enough to be well known." The official refused to budge, obliging

Mr. Juppe to show his identity card.

Mr. Chirac himself voted in Sarrazin, a village in his home Bascon of Correze in central France.

Socialist opposition leader Lionel Jospin, who campaigned with the slogan "let's change the future," voted in Cintegeville in the southwest where he is hoping to win reentry to the national assembly after losing his seat in 1993.

what advice he would give supporters voting in districts where a Front candidate did not survive the first-round vote.

Le Pen declined to say

Far-right may achieve 3 seats in election

ACCORDING TO voter surveys, the national front won between 14.8 per cent and 15.3 per cent of the first-round vote in the National Assembly election, compared to 12.4 per cent in a 1993 general election and 15 per cent won by Le Pen himself in a

1995 presidential election. The surveys predicted the front would finish with as many as three seats in the assembly, where it now has none, after next Sunday's runoff vote.

The front "has won a very great victory this evening," Le Pen told sup-

porters in a statement broadcast live on French television. "I urge all voters...to massively mobilise next Sunday so that the National Front can elect enough deputies to enable the voice of France to be heard."

Le Pen declined to say

Britain wants bigger European role in Mideast

CAIRO (AFP) — British Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Derek Fatchett said Europe should play a bigger role to help salvage the Middle East peace process and called for the resumption of Syrian-Israeli negotiations on the principle of a land-for-peace exchange.

Mr. Fatchett made the remarks in an interview pub-

lished Sunday by the London-based Arab daily Al Hayat hours before his arrival in Egypt at the start of a regional tour — the first by a member of the new Labour government.

"We want a bigger European contribution," to efforts aimed at reviving the Middle East peace process, Mr. Fatchett told Al Hayat, stressing that

European efforts should complement the U.S. role.

Mr. Fatchett also said Britain was looking forward to the resumption of Israeli-Syrian negotiations "based on the fundamental principles of the peace process, particularly land-for-peace."

In a statement issued last week Mr. Fatchett ruled out any major changes in Britain's

foreign policy in the Middle East.

Mr. Fatchett is expected to hold talks Monday with Egyptian leaders and then he will fly to Israel on the second leg of a mission which will also take him to the Palestinian territories, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, the British embassy in Cairo said.

Saudi lawyer confident British nurses will escape death sentence

KHOBAR (AFP) — The defence lawyer of two British nurses accused of murdering an Australian colleague in Saudi Arabia was confident here Sunday that they would escape the death penalty.

"It is highly unlikely that they will face the death sentence," Salah Hejailan told reporters at the end of a third hearing in the Islamic Court of Khobar, eastern Saudi Arabia.

"But the course of the trial may take a new direction," said Mr. Hejailan, apparently hinting at a possible plea bargain.

Court sources said the public prosecutor's office submitted its evidence, based on a police report on the murder of Yvonne Gilford, a 55-year-old nurse found stabbed and battered in nearby Dhahran Hospital on Dec. 11.

The trial, which opened May 19, was adjourned for three weeks until June 15, the sources said.

The two suspects, Deborah Parry and Lucille

McLaughlan, told the court that they had initially confessed only on the promise of being allowed to leave the Saudi Kingdom.

The nurses, who could be beheaded in public if convicted, said they had been subjected to "strong psychological pressure to admit to the crime, including a promise to leave the country," Mr. Hejailan said.

The families of the two Britons have so far not attended the trial, but British Consul General William Patey has been in court.

The women have appeared in court handcuffed, with shackles on their ankles and in long black Islamic cloaks. They are being kept away from the press, which is barred from the courtroom.

Under Islamic law in Saudi Arabia, the victim's family may demand the death penalty or grant mercy and take "blood money." The family in Australia has so far made it clear they do not favor mercy.

Iran rallies around moderate president after landslide win

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran rallied Sunday around its new moderate president, Mohammad Khatami, after his shocking landslide victory over the candidate of the country's ruling conservative Islamic clergy.

"I do hope that Mr. Khatami will be successful in achieving his goals and programmes," said outgoing President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who will step down in August.

Mr. Rafsanjani said, however, that Mr. Khatami's crushing 69-per cent win in Friday's election over conservative Parliamentary Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri "was not a protest vote against" the Islamic Republic.

"But clearly there were issues on the minds of voters," he told reporters. "It was a new movement of the youth and due attention must be paid to this new force."

Iran's conservative-majority parliament also pledged support Sunday to Mr. Khatami, who may face stiff opposition in the legislature to many of his reform-minded programmes.

"We are fully ready to help and cooperate with you," said a letter signed by around 200 MPs read in the assembly.

"We hope the three branches of the government can cooperate to take a giant stride towards development, social justice and realising other demands of the Iranian nation," it added.

Mr. Khatami, who has promised greater freedom and tolerance, also has received the blessing of Iran's paramount leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"A shining turning point has appeared in our history," said Mr. Khamenei, the Islamic Republic's ultimate political and religious authority.

Mr. Khatami, the radical left's candidate, may face a tough challenge however from the conservative majority in the Iranian parliament and also the hard-line Mr. Khamenei, who both strongly backed Mr. Nateq-Nouri.

Mr. Khamenei can overrule any executive order or law under the country's complex religious constitution.

But Mr. Khatami's large mandate puts him in a strong position to push through his moderate and

reform-minded agenda, and newspapers across Iran's political spectrum called for change on Sunday.

"The Iranian people voted for moderation and not conservatism or extremism," said the traditionalist Kayhan daily. "The outcome of the voting is also interpreted to be a defeat to some religious figures... who had openly advocated Mr. Nateq-Nouri."

The conservative English-language daily Tehran Times, however, urged all factions within the ruling Islamic clergy to "give a helping hand to the next president."

The paper added that the voters' "new choice had a special message for the officials: grievances and complaints must not remain unheeded."

Mr. Khatami won 20,078,187 votes (69 per cent) against 7,242,859 (25 per cent) for Mr. Nateq-Nouri out of the total 29,767,000 cast.

It was the largest turnout ever in an Iranian presidential election with 88 per cent participation, the Interior Ministry said.

Mr. Khatami and Mr. Nateq-Nouri, both 54 and clerics, had been locked in a vicious battle over the past two months in the most tightly-contested election in Iran since the 1979 Islamic revolution toppled the U.S.-backed Shah.

Even before all votes were counted, newspapers representing both conservative and moderate factions in Iran's Islamist establishment called on Saturday for democratic

reforms. "In the absence of political parties, the groups functioning as political parties do not feel that they are really accountable to the nation," the Tehran Times said.

Iranians across the country voiced a strong desire for change, listing the stagnating economy and more social freedom as priority issues, and Mr. Khatami appeared to be riding that wave.

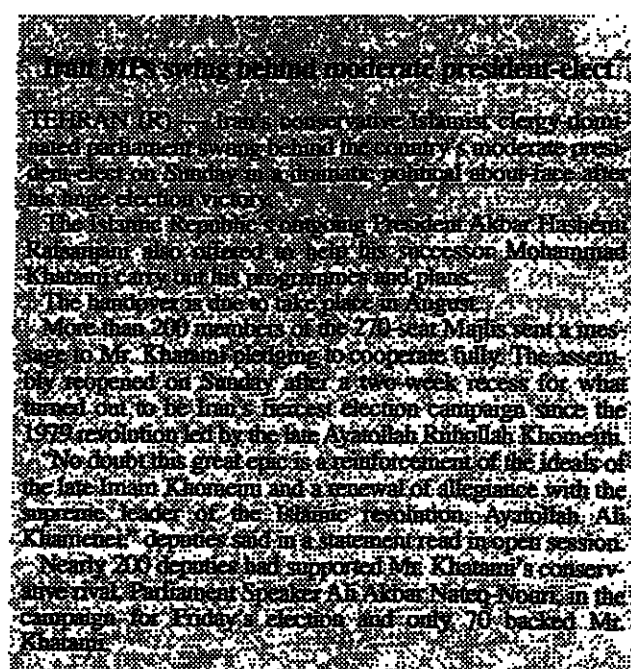
Late Saturday night, Saudi Arabia's King Fahd was the first regional leader to send a message of congratulation to Mr. Khatami, and expressed his desire to strengthen the good relations between the two brother countries.

Relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia had been tense since the revolution and ties were broken off from 1988 to 1991 but the situation has improved this year.

Mr. Khatami, forced to resign as culture minister in 1992 under pressure from conservatives and hardliners, has made personal freedom, democracy and the rule of law the main themes of his campaign platform.

His message sparked unprecedented excitement in Iran and galvanised voters to go to the polls, especially the young, women and intellectuals.

Mr. Khatami also won the support of poor rural residents with promises of greater social and economic justice, while other voters said they were not so enthusiastic but voted for him as a "protest against the regime."



U.S. observant after Iran elections

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States will closely monitor events in Iran following the victory of moderate Mohammad Khatami in national elections, officials said here.

"We're watching the situation carefully and have no opposition to the Iranian people or an Islamic government," an anonymous White House official told the New York Times.

"We need to see if there will be actual change in behaviour in those issues which have concerned us in the past such as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and human rights," the official said. Former Culture Minister Khatami defeated Parliamentary Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri in a 69 per cent landslide for president in elections Friday.

During the campaign Mr. Khatami talked about improving relations with Europe and Arab countries, but did not emphasise improved relations with the United States. "So far what we've seen from the other side, from the United States, is all pressure," a Khatami advisor told the Washington Post.

Outcry over photo of ultra-orthodox youth burning Israeli flag

TEL AVIV (AP) — A front-page newspaper photograph of a religious Jew burning an Israeli flag caused an outcry in Israel on Sunday and police said they would open an investigation of the youth in the picture.

Flag burning is against the law in Israel.

The photograph, which appeared on the front page of the Maariv newspaper, was taken Saturday night in the ultra-Orthodox Jerusalem neighbourhood of Mea Shearim, during festivities for the Jewish holiday Lag B'omer.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's spokesman said Mr. Netanyahu condemned the burning and viewed it as "a grave incident."

The incident was the main topic on morning talk radio shows.

During Lag B'omer, which began Saturday at sundown and ends Sunday evening, many Jews light bonfires to celebrate the one-day lifting of a seven-week period of semi-mourning. It is a day when Jews traditionally hold weddings and other joyous celebrations.

In Mea Shearim, ultra-

Orthodox Jews lit bonfires Saturday night along the neighbourhood's main thoroughfare, and Maariv photographed one youth tossing Israel's flag — a blue star of David on a white background — onto a blazing fire. The youth's eyes were blacked out in the picture because he is a minor.

Jerusalem police spokesman Shmuel Ben Ruby said the police were opening an investigation of the youth, based on the photographs.

He said police may ask photographers to turn over any other pictures from the Saturday night celebrations.

Jerusalem's Deputy Mayor Haim Miller, who is from the ultra-religious Agudat Israel Party, accused the photographer of staging the picture in order to hurt the reputation of Israel's religious community.

Many ultra-Orthodox Jews say they will only recognise the Jewish state when the Messiah arrives and as a result act independently of the government, for example turning to religious instead of secular courts.



Governor helps deliver baby boy on flight

KHARTOUM (AP) — Agnes Lukudu, the governor of one of Sudan's southern states, generally runs council meetings and attends to other government business. Now she can also claim skills as a midwife. When a woman went into labour on a flight from the regional capital Juba to Khartoum Saturday, Lukudu — the only other woman aboard — stepped in to assist with the delivery. "This is the first time I had to play the role of a midwife in my life," Lukudu was quoted Sunday as telling Al Sudan Al Hadeith daily. "It still surprises me how I was able to help the lady deliver her baby." The baby, a boy, was named Omar Bashir in honor of Sudan's president. Lt. Gen. Omar Bashir, Lukudu told the paper. The mother's name was not given, but both she and the child were reported in good condition. Lukudu is governor of the southern Bahr Al Jabal state and a supporter of the Bashir regime. The state capital Juba is 1,200 kilometres south of Khartoum.

Cuban anti-cholesterol pill doubles as aphrodisiac

SANTIAGO (AFP) — Sales of a Cuban pill designed to lower cholesterol levels have been shooting through the roof throughout Latin America, a Cuban doctor said at a health fair. Patients however seem to be snapping them up because of the pill's side effect as a powerful aphrodisiac. Cuban doctor Antonio Machin said. "Its effects as an aphrodisiac have been studied in experiments with laboratory animals," said Machin, who heads a team of Cuban doctors at the health fair Exposalud '97. "With male rats, we have verified an increase in the number of erections; with guinea pigs, an increase in copulations, and with monkeys, an increase in masturbation." Machin said. Cuban pharmacists told Machin that both male and female users have reported improvements in their sexual lives after taking the pills.

Swedish prince passes driving test

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — Barely 10 days after a big bash to celebrate his 18th birthday, Prince Carl Philip of Sweden has passed his driving licence and wasted no time in finding a car to drive back to school. "He was impatient to start driving and I lent him my car," his driving instructor told the daily Expressen, adding that the Prince had passed the test with "flying colours." The son of King Carl Gustav XVI, who is second-in-line behind his sister Princess Victoria for the throne, drove unaccompanied from Karlstad, in central Sweden to the neighbouring town of Kristinehamn, where he attends the Lundsberg Private School.

Beatle to display art in Germany

SIEGEN, Germany (AFP) — Former Beatle Paul McCartney is to exhibit around 70 of his paintings in the western German town of Siegen next year, cultural official for the region Wolfgang Suttner reported. Suttner, who has been working on the exhibition for the past two years, said he contacted McCartney after reading in a magazine that he had a garage packed with canvases gathering dust.



CNN's celebrated reporter Christiane Amanpour, wearing the hijab and black robe required by law, asks a question at a press conference given by Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani in Tehran, on Sunday. Amanpour is of Iranian origin and speaks fluent Farsi (AFP photo)